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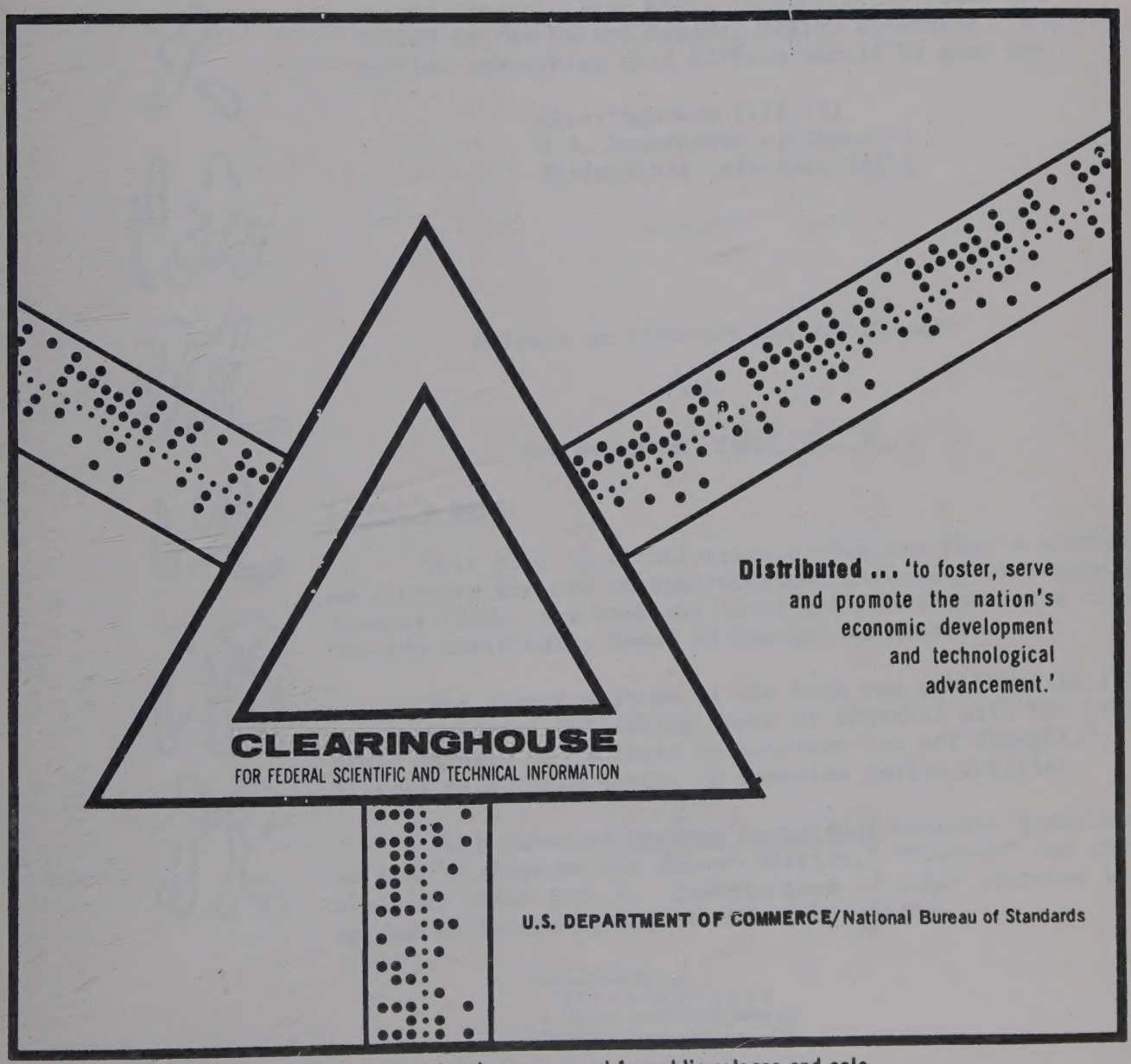
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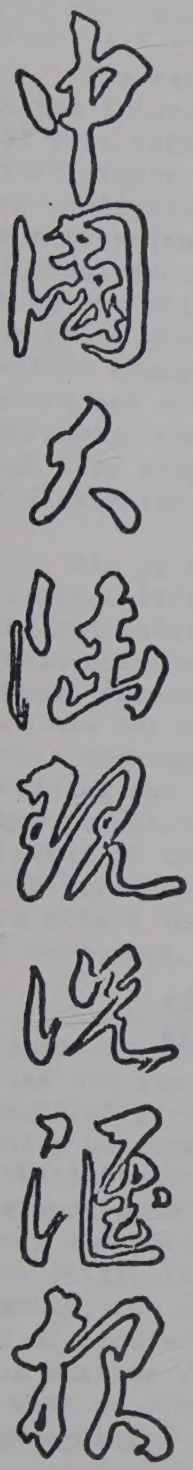

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Polemic on Literary and Art Thought

by

Yao Wen-yüan (姚文元)

Editor's Note:

This book is a collection of Yao Wen-yüan's articles on literary and art thought written in January 1957 through January 1960. The book was first published under the title "On the Revisionist Trend of Thought in Literature."

The second edition of the book was published in 1965 by the Writers' Publishing House of Shanghai with the Original title changed to "Polemic on Literary and Art Thought." Divided into three parts, it contains twelve articles.

This issue of Current Background contains translations of the "Preface to the Second Edition," "Preface" and three articles under Part I. Translations of other articles will appear in future issues of this publication.

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Unless otherwise indicated, these materials are full translations of articles appearing in Chinese Communist publications.

Preface to the Second Edition

This book was written during the great debate on literary and art thought six years ago. As I proof-read my old writings, the thrilling sound of the revolutionary storm still seems to roar in my years.

The revisionist theories of literature and art and the bourgeois tendencies in creative writing criticized and repudiated in the great polemic of 1957 were rather typical, fully revealing and all-embracing. In literary and art thought, the essential difference lay in firmly adhering to or opposing and abolishing the fundamental principles elucidated in Chairman Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art." Because the method of "setting out facts and reasoning" was employed to unfold the ideological debate to the full extent, the ideological struggle was carried out with greater thoroughness and indelible impressions were left in people's minds. The various bourgeois literary and art viewpoints encountered later on in literature and art mainly repeated those fundamental points of arguments in the bourgeois, revisionist trend of thought in literature and art of 1957, although they adopted a different form and were more skillfully disguised due to dissimilar historical conditions.

Six years have flown by, history has made another leap forward, and the socialist literature and art in the service of the broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers have also emitted a new color dazzling to the eyes. This "task-oriented" book comprising some intrinsically polemical speeches could have "passed away with time." However, because the task of ideological struggle has not become a thing of the past, "by learning the old to know the new," this book may still have a role to play as reference material for understanding the battle on the front of literary and art thought, and is therefore republished. Young people fond of literature and art who had not participated in that great debate may ascertain from this book how some bourgeois literary and art thoughts were disguised with Marxist-Leninist terms to attack the proletarian literary and art front, what slogans and tactics were used, and what "new creations" were proffered.

The ideological struggle is still going on. The experience gained in the past six years tells us: Some points of argument that had been criticized and repudiated in the past, and the emergence of "strange fetuses" and "beautiful girls" under the influence of these points of arguments, would incessantly be encountered under new circumstances. Bourgeois ideology always obstinately exhibits itself in literature and art. To be sure, it would be even more indistinct, full of twists and turns, and more distorted with words and phrases used in Marxism-Leninism so that people would find it even more difficult to distinguish it. But it is the same in essence. Consequently, the viewpoints that had been criticized and repudiated--even a number of times--in history should be constantly reviewed. This would remind us what we should persist in, what we should glorify, what we should oppose, what we should criticize and repudiate, what we should heighten our vigilance against, and what we should guard against.

The literary and art front is an important front of the class struggle in the socialist era. Literature and art have always been rather sharp at reflecting the class struggle. The rise and fall of the class struggle in society would be swiftly reflected in the sphere of literature and art. This condition is especially conspicuous when the socialist revolution goes deeper, when temporary setbacks and difficulties occur in socialist construction, or when the forward development of history comes to a new turning point.

In the literary and art sphere, to carry out the struggle for fostering the proletarian ideology and liquidating the bourgeois ideology, to boycott the corrosion of bourgeois ideology and to get rid of the influence of the bourgeois literary and art thought and of the individualist world outlook in bourgeois literary and art works on writers and artists and the masses of the people is a long-range fighting task, and it takes the tenacious efforts of several generations of people in struggle and construction to carry the socialist cultural revolution through to the end.

In some cases, the loss of footing in theory is a question of cognition, but those tendencies complementing and corresponding to the evil winds and sinister spirits that appear periodically in society--such as the "theory of human nature" and the "theory of ghosts are harmless" that are above classes and abstract--always exhibit bourgeois and feudal ideas in literature and art and reflect the attack of capitalist and feudal forces against socialism in the literary and art sphere. Sometimes, a person reflects in his own consciousness a certain tendency in society without himself knowing that this is class struggle. If he does not heighten his vigilance and go on to remold himself but cut himself off from the revolutionary struggle and the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers, then he would even take the erroneous ideological stand which he once opposed and would fall into the trap he himself had exposed. Examples of this kind are often encountered in the history of literature and art. To me the republication of this book is also a goad. It is my hope that I can continue with the transformation of my world outlook and advance with others in the new battle.

The original title of the book, "On the Revisionist Trend of Thought in Literature" has been changed to "Polemic on Literary and Art Thought." In this second edition, one article has been deleted and another article added. The latter article and one article removed from Part I of the original edition are grouped together to form Part III. The reason is that the criticism and repudiation of the bourgeois theory of human nature is a key question in the present struggle against revisionism, and since these two articles centrally discuss this question and the thought they criticize and repudiate is quite typical, they are specially listed under the same part. Apart from this, the titles of two articles have been changed to "Is Realism Changeless Forever?" and "On the So-Called Theory of 'Revealing the Seamy Side' and Creation." Some of the content has been deleted from these articles, but the content in conformity with the titles is retained.

Yao Wen-yüan
December, 1963

* * *

Preface

This book is a collection of articles written in 1957 and the first half of 1958 for the purpose of criticizing the revisionist trend of thought. It is in every respect a "task-oriented" book. It was principally due to the leadership of the Party and the warm assistance of other comrades that it was possible for me to write these crude things. All these articles are in the service of the present struggle against revisionism. Since revisionism in literature involves questions in various fields, the content of criticism and repudiation is therefore not limited to the question of literature, and criticism and repudiation of revisionism and bourgeois ideology should be carried out politically, ideologically and philosophically through the question of literature at the same time. I rejoice at devoting the whole of my spare time to the present cause of socialist literature, and I hope that I can forever "keep pace with society." My ability to do so without falling behind will give me the greatest pleasure. But since life develops at so fast a pace, no conclusion can be drawn as to whether or not I can catch up until a great deal of effort has been made.

This book is divided into two parts. The first part is a critique of the revisionist theory and the bourgeois tendency in creation under the influence of such theory. When I started to write, I had no thought of writing in series. But after writing "More on Dogma and Principle," I came to feel that the various revisionist theories and tendencies in creative writing had internal connections. In order to make deep-going criticism and repudiation, it was necessary not only to criticize and repudiate different articles and viewpoints separately but also to regard these articles and points of arguments as an inter-connected current and to analyze and criticize and repudiate their inter-relationships. Therefore, articles were subsequently written more or less serially, and whenever a revisionist point of argument was mentioned, comparison was made with other revisionist points of argument that had been criticized and repudiated so that the former was linked with the latter. The criticism and repudiation of revisionism is in literature and art the struggle between the proletarian line and the bourgeois line. It is hoped that at the time of reading these articles, readers will also link together and compare the various objects criticized and repudiated as the manifestation of various aspects of revisionism in various forms.

The second part contains three articles criticizing and repudiating Feng Hsüeh-feng (馮雪峰), Ting Ling (丁玲) and Ai Ch'ing (艾青). These three characters of the Ting-Ch'en group (丁陳集团) had many things in common in theory and creative writing. They represented for a long time a revisionist line within revolutionary literature and art, and gave rise to many revisionist theories in the domain of literature and art. The fact that they were able to pass the test of the democratic revolution but failed to pass the test of the socialist revolution shows precisely that the socialist revolution is a revolution for the complete liquidation of all exploiting classes and exploitation thoughts, and that anyone firmly adhering to the reactionary political ideas and class stand of the bourgeoisie will

without fail be crushed by history. The exposure of the Ting-Ch'en group marked the important victory of the socialist revolution in the domain of literature and art and the disastrous failure of the bourgeois line in literature and art. The two articles about Ting Ling and Ai Ch'ing sought to analyze, criticize and repudiate from the development of history the bourgeois political ideas and the bourgeois ideology of individualism expressed in their creative writings and to sort out a principal clue.

The struggle between the two lines--the proletarian line and the bourgeois line--in literature and art began as far back as the period of the democratic revolution. The literary and art cause of the proletariat grew to maturity and developed in this struggle. "The proletarian line in literature and art has gone through its stage of childhood, committed dogmatic, sectarian and other mistakes, and after the publication of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's 'Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art' in 1942, laid down a solid theoretical foundation."* It is clear to us that from Hu Feng (胡风) and Feng Hsüeh-fang up to Liu Shao-t'ang (刘绍棠), what they have attacked under the guise of "opposing dogmatism" are precisely the fundamental principles in this document of historical significance and world significance that forms the theoretical foundation of the proletarian line in literature and art.

In his "Talks" Comrade Mao Tse-tung has, in accordance with the revolutionary practice of China, creatively developed Lenin's theory concerning Party literature, solved a series of principled questions, dealt fatal blows to all sorts of bourgeois theories, and pointed out the most fundamental road for bringing prosperity to socialist literature and art. This document is gradually bringing worldwide destruction to revisionism and all bourgeois literary and art thoughts. The revisionists regard the viewpoint in this document as a thorn in the flesh, and they clamor that it "won't do" whenever there is a chance for them to do so. This mirrors precisely their deep fear of truth. We must firmly adhere to the various fundamental principles in the "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," bravely carry out creative work and reforms so as to bring socialist literature into full bloom and despondency to the bourgeois elements.

As far as its extensiveness in scale and the violence of its attack were concerned, the revisionist trend of thought that emerged in literature in 1956 through 1957 was without precedent in history. It had theories and guided creative writing with such theories. It also usurped certain positions (i.e., Wen-i Pao, Jen-min Wen-hsüeh), thus giving rise to an integrated revisionist current. This revisionist trend of thought at home also complemented and corresponded to the anti-socialist, anti-communist, anti-Marxist-Leninist modern revisionist trend of thought in the international arena after the Hungarian incident. As things stood, it was clear that the

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* Chou Yang's "A Great Debate on the Litarary and Art Front."

fighting of a battle of decision was inevitable. A great debate began. As a result of the great debate, the socialist line in literature and art won a great victory, and the revisionist line in literature and art went completely bankrupt.

What fundamental principles are after all opposed by the revisionists? On which questions does the most important difference between us and the revisionists lie?

First, in the relationship of literature and art with politics, the revisionists are firmly opposed to putting literature and art in the service of proletarian politics and to the leadership of the Communist Party. This is the most fundamental difference between the Marxist-Leninist thought and the revisionist thought in literature and art. We advocate that the literary and art cause is a component of the Party cause, that literature and art must serve revolutionary politics and must be led and supervised by the Party. This fundamentally guarantees the development of socialist literature and art and their growth to maturity. The revisionists, however, attack the Party leadership of "restricting" the writers' "enthusiasm" for creation. They hold that in order to serve politics there will be no "freedom of creative writing." In point of fact, what the revisionists oppose is only putting literature and art in the service of socialist politics because their object is precisely to put literature and art in the service of bourgeois politics. They oppose the leadership of the Communist Party because they attempt to seize the leadership from the Communist Party so as to enable literature and art to take the reactionary capitalist road.

There are two kinds of freedom: capitalist freedom and socialist freedom. We firmly adhere to socialist freedom, and all literature in the service of socialism has a vast realm to bring its originality into play. But we must firmly deal blows to all works aimed at restoring capitalism, because if there is freedom for the bourgeoisie to publicize capitalist restoration, there will be no freedom for the working class and the working people to build socialism. Freedom is derived by mankind from knowledge of objective laws. The "freedom of creative writing" demanded by the revisionists causes the writers to depart from the proletarian stand in conformity with the laws of social development for the bourgeois stand antagonistic to social development, and as a result, they can only sink into the abyss of fallacy and reaction and have not the least freedom to talk of.

In order to oppose making literature and art serve proletarian politics, the revisionists unilaterally emphasize the so-called "particularity of art" in an attempt to use the method of exaggerating particularity to negate the political character of literature and art and the class character of literature and art in class society. The revisionists oppose the exhibition of a clear-cut communist ideology in literature and art, and think of all ways and means to negate the fundamental principles of socialist literature. Their words are well-spoken, but opposition to the Marxist class theory is the common characteristic of all revisionist theories. This is their "weapon" for opposing literature and art in the service of politics.

Second, in the relationship of literature and art with reality, the revisionists oppose taking the clear and definite proletarian stand to reflect the new and progressive socialist life. One school advocates so-called "writing about truth." The revisionists of this school stand correctness in politics and truth in art against each other. Juggling black and white, they distort works that take the correct political stand, truthfully reflect the bright socialist life and create advanced characters among the working people free from individualist concepts as "formulation, conceptualization" and "untruthful." They advocate so-called "revealing the seamy side," "telling truth," thus taking the bourgeois stand to attack and uglify the Communist Party and new society, exaggerating the secondary shortcomings as fundamental shortcomings of a dominant status, cooking up the vestiges of the bureaucratic style left over from the old society as though they were the products of the socialist society, attacking the shortcomings among the laboring people as though they were enemies, and leading writers to write works against socialism in the form of opposing bureaucracy. At the same time, they also glorify the bourgeois individualists and the reactionary bourgeois ideology as though they were "heroes" and the "advanced" ideology. The revisionists of this school are also opposed to the generalization, concentration and typification of art, and are especially opposed to the role of the revolutionary ideals of the proletariat in creative writing. They advocate "portraying things as they are" and "there is ideological character in what is true." Therefore, they sometimes also display the vulgar naturalist tendency in creative writing.

Another school opposes the idea that literature is a reflection of real life. It advocates a kind of "humanitarianism," "humanity," "human nature" that is above classes, saying that this kind of "humanitarianism," "humanity," "human nature" has been changeless in mankind since ancient times, and that works with this kind of "humanitarianism" or "humanity," "human nature" are at once outstanding and even great works. If the Marxist world outlook or the reflection of reality in literature and art is emphasized, works certainly become "formulistic and conceptualized." The revisionists of this school regard the expression of abstract "humanitarianism," "normal behavior of human beings" as the task of literature, advertize bourgeois human nature to oppose proletarian human nature, and actually sing the old tune of the bourgeois theory of human nature. The "subjective power" and "hot-blooded heart" in Feng Hsüeh-feng's theory are also things of this kind.

Superficially these two schools appear to be two extremes, but actually they both oppose the proletarian stand, the Party-spirit principle of literature and art and historical materialism, and they both distort the correct relationship of literature and art with the livelihood of the people and the relationship of subjectivity with objectivity.

Third, in the relationship of literature and art with the people, the revisionists oppose making literature and art serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. They oppose popularization work, vilify the new socialist literature and art in the service of the workers, peasants and soldiers as "low-class" and "low in artistic level," disparage, attack and negate the

socialist literary works liked by the broad masses of the people, obliterate the basic difference between socialist literature and the various kinds of realist literature in "content and characteristic," and erase the great revolutionary nature of socialist literature in the world history of literature. On the other hand, the revisionists also uncritically prostrate themselves before bourgeois literature and art and call for the "elevation" of socialist literature and art in the bourgeois direction. In ideological content, they advocate with every effort the use of sympathy and pity to express the inner contradictions, agony and split of the boutgeois individuals, oppose the writers' endeavor to portray the lofty spiritual outlook of the laboring people, beautify the anti-socialist, anti-people spiritual world of the ultra-individualists, and oppose the criticism and repudiation of the individualist ideas and sentiments of the bourgeois intellectuals.

Fourth, in the relationship of literary and art creation with the ideology of writers, the revisionists are opposed to the guiding role of the Marxist world outlook in creative writing and to the call on writers and artists to study Marxism-Leninism, keep in close touch with the workers, peasants and soldier and carry out thoroughgoing self-remolding. All of them repeat Hu Feng's reactionary theories, such as "Marxism can be attained through practice of creative writing," "loyalty to realism can span defects in world outlook." There is derived in this connection the preposterous theory that so long as one is "loyal to reality," one who is ideologically reactionary also can write progressive works. Although revisionists of this kind also call for "opposition to dogmatism," yet they themselves are the most obstinate dogmatists. They are completely cut off from the practical conditions of literary and art creation, and they one-sidedly grasp and desperately distort Engel's statement on Balzac's realism for use as their own capital against Marxism. All their talks are inseparable from Tolstoy and Balzac. They close their eyes to the experiences and lessons in the lively history of literature and vivid real life, and obstinately cling to Hu Feng's rotten stuff. They are swindlers in the theoretical field who "shut their ears when stealing the bells" to deceive themselves as well as others. Anyone who is fooled by such theories would go astray toward Hu Feng's thought.

Fifth, in regard to the criteria of literary and art criticism, the revisionists oppose the use of two sets of criteria--political criteria and artistic criteria--to gauge work, oppose giving first place to political criteria. They advocate that "art is politics," and that "when there is artistic character, there certainly is political character," but actually endeavor to give first place to artistic criteria. The essence of this kind of theory is "art for the sake of art." Its object is to protect the poisonous weeds with definite artistic character under the criterion of first place to art, smother certain fragrant flowers with the socialist political tendency but possessing certain shortcomings in art, and develop reactionary bourgeois literature and art.

Sixth, in regard to style of art, the revisionists make every effort to promote imitation of other countries, and are opposed to creating national forms and styles that the laboring people like to see and hear. The revisionists always turn their eyes toward the bourgeoisie of other countries.

They laud to the skies literature created in the capitalist era of the West and even greatly extol certain "tactics" adopted by contemporary bourgeois literature and art on the decline. Without the least creative spirit, they fall on their knees and are most slavish. The minds of these people are soaked with capitalist poison, and they have not even the courage to stand erect. They are capitulationists in ideology and cosmopolitans in art.

The above points are the most important ones, and there are naturally many more concrete points of argument. In conformity with these revisionist theories, there emerge various capitalist tendencies in creative writing. In the two articles "On One Tendency in Poetry" and "The Revisionist Trend of Thought in Literature and the Tendency in Creative Writing," a more concentrated criticism is made against the bourgeois tendencies in poems and novels. Naturally this is inadequate.

When making thoroughgoing criticism of revisionism, it is also necessary to oppose and shun dogmatism. Dogmatic skepticism of or opposition to the policy of "letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" is entirely wrong. This not only runs counter to the instruction of the Party concerning the correct handling of contradictions among the people, but also would hamper variety in art creation under the direction of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and is disadvantageous to the overcoming of the bourgeois ideology by Marxism at a faster rate and with greater completeness. Dogmatism finds another expression in its departure from reality, its empty talk of theory, its swallowing raw and whole of some concepts of the literary theories of other countries, its lack of independence and creative spirit, and its lack of the communist style that firmly adheres to truth and carries all before it. The revisionists are heavily pedantic, reading not the new works and paying not much attention to the new problems emerging in actual life. They lay more stress on the past than on the present, cut themselves off from the masses, obstinately adhere to established rules, and are sometimes rough and sometimes timid. They sever theory from actuality, and as a result, theory becomes dogma without the revolutionary critical spirit. This tendency is doubtlessly disadvantageous to the development of socialist literature, and we must get rid of it.

The struggle between the two roads in literature and art will continue a long time. This struggle is tortuous, undulating, beset with reversals, and sometimes rather acute. "Revisionism is more dangerous than dogmatism," and whenever there is an opportunity, it would rise again to press on with attack, but would never vanish just because it has been defeated this time. In order to plant the red flag throughout the domain of literature and art, it is still necessary to carry on the ideological revolution. If we neglect the struggle in this field, become lethargic and lower our guard, we would make mistakes. Although the Party has repeatedly taught that we must pay attention to the ideological struggle, yet every time after the upsurge of a large-scale struggle is over, there are always some comrades who think that they "can relax" and that "this is probably the last large-scale struggle." As a result, they are disarmed and even made captives when the bourgeois ideology makes the next raid. We must learn a lesson this time, keep our

minds in a sober state, and continue to use the method of class analysis to analyze various phenomena.

We have full confidence in the future, we have "blind faith in the future." The future belongs to the great communist era, and the literature of the future is affiliated with the socialist and communist literature that knows no precedent in history. Even though bourgeois literature is still struggling, it is doomed. Socialist literature is still young and it has a boundless broad and bright future.

Since its basic guiding thought is to mirror life, socialist literature is Chairman Mao's theory concerning the correct handling of two types of contradictions--contradictions among the people and contradictions between the enemy and ourselves. In content, it is socialist--it takes the proletarian stand to reflect the revolutionary life of the people, endeavors to reflect the contradictions and struggle of the socialist era, energetically molds the images of the heroic characters among the workers, peasants and soldiers in the revolutionary struggle, and educates the people with lofty communist ideals and the communist spirit. As far as the audience it serves is concerned, it is in the service of millions of laboring people, that is, the workers, peasants and soldiers. As far as its style is concerned, it is one of the proletariat and the Chinese nation, and having a clearcut class and national color and a high degree of originality, it never conforms to what is handed down by foreign, ancient and dead people. As far as its method is concerned, it is one of combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism, of combining a high degree of realism in art with a high degree of communist idealism on the basis of Marxist-Leninist ideology, of combining the sensible analysis of realistic life with revolutionary idealism, of combining the typical generalization of contemporary life with the future outlook, of combining the inspiring eulogy of the socialist, communist cause with the sharp criticism and repudiation of things that are rotten and backward. As far as its basic theme is concerned, socialist literature is full of revolutionary optimism and earth-shaking revolutionary heroism, is forever vigorously inspiring people to go forward, is insulated from all sorts of pessimism, and never causes the people to lose confidence even at the time of portraying mistakes.

Socialist literature incorporates the revolutionary life of the advanced laboring people and all things in the world in the picture created and the subject matter is infinite. We trust with not the least doubt that the socialist literature and communist literature of China will scale the pinnacle of world literature and create miracles that will startle the world. By that time, all skeptics will be dumbfounded. Socialist and communist literature will appear with a brilliance dazzling to the eyes of the world. It will be as majestic as the mountains, as solid as the earth, as deep and broad as the oceans, as brilliant as the morning clouds!

Let us fight bravely and create things courageously for the prosperity of socialist literature under the illumination of this beacon of the general line of building socialism!

Yao Wen-yüan
May 29, 1958

* * *

Dogma and Principle

- a discussion with Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin (姚雪垠)

After the contention of a hundred schools of thought, many new problems have been brought forward, and this is a good phenomenon. Reticence can only cover up mistakes and only contention can reveal truth.

In his "Miscellany on the Question of Creative Writing," Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin has sharply brought forward three big questions and seven kinds of deviation. He shouts at the top of his voice for the "complete liquidation" of what he calls "evil wind," but his spearhead is directed at "dogmatism and formulism." I am of the view, however, that the many "deviations of a fundamental nature" denounced by Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin are not affiliated to dogmatism, but are fundamental principles that have been proved to be correct by more than ten years of practice in literary and art creation. This merits our study and discussion in a down-to-earth manner. Due to the space available, I cannot deal with all those questions I do not agree with, and I can only discuss two or three questions which I consider as most important.

Concerning the Question of Source of Creation and Ideological Remolding

At the Yenan forum on literature and art, Chairman Mao had mentioned that the life of the people was the only inexhaustible source of literary and art creation. He also repeatedly emphasized: "They are the only source, for there can be no other." But Mr. Yao suggests another and a different source, which is "life experience." He says: "There is no class character in looking upon life experience as the source of creation, and the key to the question lies in what stand is taken to deal with and apply life experience."

So let us study these two sources.

First, in saying that the life of the people is the source of creation, this means that a writer must go beyond the limitation of his own life circle to acquaint himself with the life of the broad masses of laboring people. The "life" we commonly refer to is also the life of the laboring people, that is the life of the workers, peasants and soldiers. Because mere dependence on the past narrow life experience of an individual to reflect the reality is extremely limited in depth and breadth, if the life experienced is not on the side of essence and mainstream and the writer lacks power of understanding, the grasping of this point to "write about reality" may end in the writing of works that are antagonistic to the essence and mainstream of today's life. Only by keeping in close touch with and getting well acquainted with the life of the people, understanding various types of people in life and translating the life of the broad masses of the people into one's own direct life experience can one proceed further with generalization in art. As realistic life changes at a very fast pace today, the spiritual outlook of people also changes and grows to maturity at a fast

rate. Regardless of whether the workers or peasants of today are portrayed, it is not possible to deduce things merely on the strength of past experience, and we must once again go deep into life. Past experience can only play a certain role but cannot be taken as the source of creation.

"Life experience" is merely what one has seen and gone through, one's knowledge of society. An individual among the people is like a grain in a vast sea. "Life experience" must be written to the finish, but what should be done after this has been accomplished? With the past life experience all written down, the source of this so-called "life experience" is also exhausted. Only by going once again deep into the life of the laboring people to take part personally in the struggle of the laboring people for the transformation of society and nature can one acquire new life experience and new writing material from this boundlessly rich source.

Furthermore, not everything in the life experience of an individual can be written, since the life of some individuals has no esthetic content or typical character and cannot be taken as subject matter for creative writing. People with a small life circle and a paucity of life experience in the past and people with a vast knowledge of life who all along lived among the masses in the past cannot be mentioned in the same breath. In the case of some people, if they merely depend on some life experience of the past, even though they write about the past, they also cannot write a thing of great significance.

Take for example a person who had spent a long time teaching in school in the past but who never came in contact with the students' movement, had little intercourse with friends in other circles, and adopted the attitude of leading an isolated life for his own good....After liberation, he wanted to take such "life experience" as the "source of creation." Although he wrote about the life of teachers of the old era, he also found it rather difficult to write a good story. Because he was unfamiliar with and did not understand the ideological trend of various kinds of people in the current of the era, it was very difficult for him to create images of typical significance.

The life of the people is in the true sense the sole source of creation. The life of experience of an individual is but a small stream of this source. Compared with the limited "life experience" of an individual, the life of the people is boundlessly magnificent and broad.

Second, going deep into the life and struggle of the people indefinitely with heart and soul is an important condition for remolding the thought of a writer. Only by way of studying Marxism-Leninism and plunging oneself into the heat of actual struggle can one gradually transform various old ideas and correctly understand and apply one's past life experience. But if a writer takes the "life experience" he has acquired as the inexhaustible source of creation, then there is basically no need for him to plunge into the fiery struggle, and the remolding of one's own ideology through life practice is also basically rejected.

At present, there are some people who oppose continued emphasis of ideological remolding, and some theorists think that world outlook and stand are questions of secondary importance and that the important thing is to "write about reality" and write about "life experience." Let us discuss briefly here the question of the "class character" of life experience.

Life experience comprises the knowledge of life accumulated by writers in life practice and their understanding of life. These two things are closely combined. The life experience of people is always engendered by their participation in social activity and working life. Life gives rise to life experience, and with life practice, there come understanding and knowledge of life. It is not possible to stand things on their head by saying that there is life experience first and that such "experience" gives rise to life. This allegation is not in correspondence with common knowledge. However, because the class status of people is at variance, their life experience is inevitably stamped with the brand of a class. With the exception of life experience of a purely technical nature, the part of life experience implicating the understanding of society and nature inevitably bears a class character. Only after the mistaken ideas have been corrected by way of ideological remolding can the life experience of the past effectively play the role of writing material. This was why Chairman Mao repeatedly emphasized that there could be "genuine proletarian literature and art" only after the transformation of thoughts and feelings had been "thoroughly solved." Mr. Yao and some theorists seem to have forgotten this point.

Take for example the capitalists--the example given by Mr. Yao. A veteran writer may be so very familiar with the capitalists among his relatives and friends that he "would think of them no sooner he closes his eyes." But can this mean that he has a very profound understanding of "their thoughts, feelings and characters"? Not necessarily so. If he lacks the proletarian stand and the Marxist world outlook, it is quite possible that he sees only the superficial side of the capitalists, but does not have very deep understanding of the aspect of their means of exploitation in the old society--especially the side of contradiction between the capitalists and the workers and of their activities in the factories. Only by going to the factories to get in touch with the workers, to take part in the life and struggle of the workers, to sense the feelings of the working class, and to understand the change in relationship between the workers and the capitalists in past years and the content and various forms of class struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie, can the capitalists be truly and profoundly understood. Without such thoughts and feelings of the working class, a good story cannot be written even with more life experience. As to the young writers belittled by Mr. Yao, provided they come from among the workers, they could understand more profoundly and in the true sense the character--and the essence--of the capitalists. Speaking from the angle of ideological remolding, therefore, it is also improper to describe "life experience" as the "source of creation."

Concerning the Question of New and Old Life Experience

It is naturally wrong to pay no attention to the past life experience of the old writers. The new writers lack the knowledge of old life, and this is truly also a deficiency on their part. But it is also too much to come to the conclusion from this that it is a "deviation" to "let a youth short of life experience and general knowledge go to a place with a vast historical background and a complex relationship," or to hold the view that the flowers produced by young writers must have "few branches and leaves and simple petals."

Whether a person has little or much life experience cannot be gauged merely by age. Life is characterized by its two aspects--scope and depth. Because their scope of life is limited, young writers should learn humbly from life and from old workers. But because of their protracted life in one environment, it is entirely possible for them to have deeper understanding of life. Quite a number of young writers born of working people in Shanghai have written many excellent works that reflect the creative character and labor of the working class and strongly manifest the communist spirit of the working class. Such works offer very good evidence since they are by no means made up of "few branches and leaves and simple petals."

We have a very broad range of subject matters to write about today. The life of the workers, peasants and soldiers is the broadest and richest life. Isn't the struggle of several hundred million people, equivalent to more than 90 percent of the population, for the transformation of the objective world and the subjective world in accordance with the socialist orientation, the unity of several hundred million people to wage war against the class enemies, against nature, against the old ideas in their minds the broadest, richest and newest life? In addition to this, from the past to the present, from the 1911 Revolution to the "May 4 Movement," from the "May 4 Movement" to the liberation, from the proletarian revolutionary fighters to the capitalists...all kinds of people and subject matters can be described so long as they are of educational significance, have a social content or are capable of helping the people to move the wheel of history forward. The Party consistently promotes the creation of a variety of subject matters and is opposed to a narrow interpretation of subject matter.

Regardless of what is written, however, what is most important and of the greatest universal significance to us should be given the most important place. Should we write about new things or old things after all? I think we should mainly write about new things. Since socialist literature and art must educate the people with the socialist, communist ideology, they must reflect not only how people fight for socialist ideals, but also--and this is more important--the great practice of socialist revolution and socialist construction carried out by the masses of the people. We also must promote the effort of all people to write about the important changes in the socialist revolution and socialist construction after liberation, to delineate the spiritual outlook of the heroic characters of the socialist

era. This should be the mainstream in creative writing, and is not in contradiction with the advocacy of a broad range of subject matters.

The great vitality of socialist literature and art lies in their portraying for the first time in history the development and formation of the new life of socialism and the new image of the laboring people fighting for the creation of a new life. The revolutionary socialist literature could not have obtained so high a success had it taken the portrayal of Russian life as the mainstream instead of regarding such epic-like works as Mother, Chapayev, Iron Current, Destruction, How Is Steel Refined, Good, Young Guards, etc., as the mainstream of literary creation. Life is the source of creation, and the mainstream of socialist literature must draw material from the militant, ebullient socialist life for its works. This is an important condition for impelling the development of literature to a new stage.

Therefore, the energetic promotion of the effort of writers to get well acquainted with the new life and to demonstrate the revolutionary struggle and heroic labor of the workers, peasants and soldiers of the socialist revolutionary period is demanded for the observation of the development of literature from the historical viewpoint--including the improvement of art. Only this can develop our socialist literature to a new stage. But what Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin emphasizes is to get well acquainted with the old life by saying: "In order to generalize the greater reality of history and to mold fuller typical images, it is necessary for any writer to know not only the life of today, but also the life of yesterday." This to some degree is to stand things on their head.

Generally speaking, a writer who is well acquainted with the life of the old society is much better than one who is not. It is also necessary to get well acquainted with the old life in the creation of certain works. Concretely speaking, however, this depends on what is written. The word "any" in "any writer" is out of proportion. For example, young writers who have no "knowledge" of life under Kuomintang rule can also write about the life of children. Conversely, many writers, even those brought up in the new era, should give first place to their effort in getting well acquainted with the new life. A person must be familiar with and have a deep understanding of the life of the socialist revolutionary era and he must develop profound feelings for the laboring people before he can understand the old life from a new ideological plane and make the reflection of past life serve the struggle of today.

In front of the new socialist era, it is inadequate for any writer to rely merely on life experience of the past, and to get well acquainted with the new is more important and holds the first place in work. Some old writers are not satisfied with their past knowledge of life, and they go deep into the new life in an endeavor to create works that reflect the new life of the new era. This attitude merits our welcome. In this connection, the sectarian viewpoint is most harmful, and we must oppose the tendency to discriminate against the old writers or to slight the new writers.

Concerning Criticism

Literary and art criticism had many shortcomings in the past, and quite a number of them has been uncovered in the past year. At present, there is little mention--if at all--of such an expression as "petty-bourgeois ideas and sentiments." A very great part of Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin's article accuses criticism of "administering rebuke in search of perfection," "too many taboos," "wantonly labeling," "rowdyism," etc. Of course, none of us dares to say that it is incorrect to criticize such shortcomings, but if rowdyism is countered with rowdyism and labeling with labeling...then it is quite possible that another "evil wind" will be whipped up after the elimination of this "evil wind."

For example, Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin says that in the past, "the expression 'petty-bourgeois ideas and sentiments' is often used to criticize the writers, and this phrase has simply become the magic spell for tightening the gold crown on the head that has caused the writers to move gingerly without daring to write about love affairs, the warmth of friendship and private life....Although not the entire reason, this had much to do with why the subject matter of literature was so narrow and the works were so dry in a number of years after liberation."

Readers are able to understand without much explanation that the past criticism against the presence of petty-bourgeois ideas and sentiments in works tended to be excessive in some cases but was correct in most cases. For example, the criticism against Hsiao Ya-mu's (萧也牧) works remains to be correct in principle. Today, even if we want to write about love affairs, friendship and private life, we also absolutely cannot restore petty-bourgeois sentimentalism and philistinism for writing about private life. We must move forward, not backward. The reason that certain works were "dry" in the past was also rather complicated. The most important reason was that the writers themselves lacked experience because they had not gone deep into the life of the laboring people, had not merged as one with the laboring people in thought and feeling, were not well acquainted with the masses, and failed to understand them deeply. This and the criticism of petty-bourgeois ideas and sentiments are basically two different things, and the pulling of them together is anything but down-to-earth.

Mr. Yao Hsüeh-yin hopes that criticism can make "all writers with revolutionary conscience feel that it would be nice if there were no taboos." We are never opposed to opposition to rowdyism and energetically hitting rowdy criticism. But as long as there is criticism, the things endorsed and opposed are bound to arouse repercussions in the mind of a writer. Critics opposed to the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology will give rise to "taboos" in the minds of some writers toward bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, and it is not possible to have "no taboos" unless all forms of criticism are abolished. So long as the criticism is not so rough as to try to kill at one blow, the writers with "revolutionary conscience" are also quite willing to make do with some correct "taboos." For example, Comrade

Chou Yang's criticism of the shortcomings in Ku Yü's (谷峪) novel has led many writers to place the naturalist tendency under "taboo." What is wrong with this?

Opposition to rowdyism, dogmatism and sectarianism in critical work is something we must carry on, but this is merely one side of the question. On the other side, we also cannot adopt the liberalist attitude in ideological principle and in artistic tendency. If at the time of opposing rowdyism we also oppose and forsake as "dogmatism" the use of class analysis to analyze thoughts and feelings in works, then we would abandon our ideological position in literature and art.

January 1957

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On a New Trend in Composition of Poetry

After the implementation of the specific policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom, a new atmosphere has appeared in poetry. Poetry draws material from a broader scope, there are less formulistic and conceptualized poems, and quite a number of poets pay attention to polish in art and the pursuit of artistic style. The national legacy of poetry has won the great attention of everybody. The specific policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom has extensively mobilized the enthusiasm of poets and young creators of literature, thus opening up a broad road to the prosperity of poetic art. The facts show that the specific policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom is correct in every respect. We should first perceive this point in order to avoid the covering up of the main aspect of knowledge by certain undesirable phenomena.

However, this does not mean to say that we need not pay attention to certain undesirable tendencies in the composition of poetry. Socialist art has all along been developing in the struggle against bourgeois, petty-bourgeois art. At a time we let a hundred socialist flowers come into bloom, bourgeois ideology would blossom in the guise of fragrant flower, and as we implement the policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend, we anticipate that the socialist ideology and the capitalist ideology, the advanced and the backward, would appear simultaneously and that there would be ideological struggle. In order to develop advance socialist art, we must look the question of creative writing in the face, and criticize and repudiate in a down-to-earth manner the erroneous and backward ideology and the undesirable tendencies.

The life of the people is rich and colorful, and the people have also an all-round need of art. But regardless of what socialist art writes about, the education of the people with the communist ideology and morality must be taken as the point of departure before our diversification can take the form of revolutionary, proletarian diversification, and not of bourgeois diversification. At present, amidst the demand for diversification of subject matter, some people also tend to go to another extreme: Subject matter calls neither for selection nor refinement, and a poet may write about what he has in mind. As we leaf through a book, we find that delicate poems describing love affairs and scenery are the rage of the day and have a rather universal ring. This reflects that the number of vigorous, militant and rousing poems about the mainstream of the life of the laboring people of the era has decreased, and furthermore, studies conducted in this aspect have also disappeared under the pens of some theorists.

The positive love affairs described by revolutionary literature and art today can only reflect the exquisite and healthy love affairs based on the ideas and sentiments of the laboring people. In the socialist society, the happiness and joy felt by the laboring people in love life and the growth to maturity of the communist morality manifested in love life are also part and parcel of the life of the people. In real life, love and labor are closely combined, and among the poems extolling socialist labor, it is quite natural that there are also some poems extolling the new love affairs.

If love poems are looked at in this sense, then even poems about love affairs should have their social significance and objective, like poems reflecting other kinds of life. They should strive to express the new internal world of the laboring people of the new era, make the people sense the excellence of the socialist new life and love more ardently the fatherland and socialism, help the people overcome the influence of bourgeois ideology (the bourgeois ideology is often most deep-rooted in sexual relationship), and foster the noble integrity and communist sentiments of the people. This is also part and parcel of communist moral education.

In any case, however, the mainstream of our poems is not to write about love affairs, but to eulogize the people and the revolution. We cannot so emphasize love life as to accord it the decisive role in man's life, nor can we devote page after page to love poems.*

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* Note to the second edition: It is also necessary to give some supplementary reason to this point of argument. Educating the younger generation to acquire strong revolutionary ideas, the revolutionary will to fight resolutely for the communist cause and the interests of the people, and the revolutionary fortitude to stand the test of arduous life is a grave task bearing on the morrow and future of our fatherland. Works of literature and art are powerful weapons that spiritually affect the youth; they have a great influence on the habits of life and moral outlook of the youth. If love poems about the infatuation of boys and girls were published everywhere, the young people would devote their energy to the excess in this field, and their sentiments would also become narrow and brittle. This is very unfavorable to their growth to maturity. When a person puts his own love affair above everything else or gives first place to his love, marriage and family affairs in his own mind, he necessarily would lose his enthusiasm and activism toward the cause of the fatherland and the people, and when the revolutionary struggle requires him to lay down his life for the fatherland and the people, he would hesitate, waver and even desert or rebel. One form of manifestation of the bourgeois trend of thought in literature and art is to put one's own love affair above everything else, to stand it against the interests of the Party, the people and the fatherland, and to distort the revolutionary and just war of the proletariat as wrecking "personal happiness." This way of doing things is directed against the vulnerable spot of the majority of the young people who have not been tempered in the class struggle. We have learned by experience from this lesson that the playing up of the happiness of love in an isolated manner to the excess runs counter to fostering the proletarian revolutionary spirit of the young people. There are at present too many love poems and love melodies, and this merits attention. I do not mean to negate such subject matter, but I advocate that it should be given a correct place.

The present situation, however, is that while there are not many elegant and enchanting love poems, large numbers of love poems with hackneyed tunes that moan emptily for men and women in love have appeared. Many youths actually write love poems without knowing the objective of such poems. Or else they think that there is no objective in writing love poems, and that good poems can be written merely by writing "I love you, I love you"....A new "convention" has therefore appeared and love poems are localized within a very small scope, or just describe physical contact (kissing, embracing, fondling, etc.), or give isolated description to how one is bewitched by love and cannot live on without love, or raise love to a plane that surpasses everything else in life as though there is nothing more important than love in the world....These poems pay no attention to delineating the noble spiritual outlook in love life. As a result, quite a number of love poems actually eulogize the bourgeois way of life and the bourgeois idea of love above all. After reading these poems, one is only left with the impressions of "tightly embracing each other" and "eagerly kissing each other" in the dark woods, or of the hope of the couple "walking from night to dawn" "like the night-walkers" (these sentences are quoted from some love poems).

The literature and art of the landlord class and the bourgeoisie have put out an abundance of works extolling the love affairs of "gifted scholars and beauties" and the "pampered sons and daughters of lords and ladies." They use this formula to delineate love in isolation as the sole content of life. In a class society, however, the love and hate of people cannot be severed from the love and hate of their classes, and the kind of people one would love would be in accord with one's class sentiments. The human relationship reflected in love life is precisely a special expression of social, class relationship (of the same class and different classes). The pursuit of so-called "eternal love" that is above classes and cut off from society is nothing more than a beautification of the mode of life of the exploiting classes.

Love poems of this kind have already exerted an undesirable influence on the life of the young people by causing a section of them to go after the petty-bourgeois love life that is divorced from the collective and labor. But this is not the worst thing. The worst thing is to disguise lust as love. After the publication of the poetry magazine Hsing-hsing [Star] in Szechwan, the Szu-ch'uan Jih-pao initiated a heated discussion of the poems "Kiss" and "Vegetation." Most writers think that "Kiss" is a lustful poem, but the author of "Kiss"--Yüeh Pai ( )--voiced disagreement. He held that "Kiss" was a "close-up" expressing "sincere love." He said: "Men must not only do manual work, carry out construction and wage war, but also fall in love, marry and raise a family."

This kind of counter-criticism is baseless and without strength. The nauseating yellow affection is most conspicuously exhibited in "Kiss." Not all things in life can be adopted in creative writing and not everything in life has aesthetic content. Literature has its own social role and demand in aesthetics. In order to educate the people with the socialist ideology, it must subject subject-matter to selection, option and refinement. The view

that "writing about reality" (writing about what one's likes to write about) is equal to "realism" or even "social realism" is retrogression toward naturalism and would depart from the direction of serving socialism.

But such a poem as "Kiss" is by no means an isolated case. I have read of a poem with the fiancee of the author as subject matter. Throughout the poem, the author talks about "the soft arms," "the lithesome body",... his fiancee "carrying water for him to take a bath." He also calls this the description of "pure love." In order to distinguish love from lust in art and in order to discuss further what is "sincere love" with Yüeh Pai, I want to make here a concrete discussion of where "Kiss" is lustful.

"Sincere love" gives people a noble feeling and makes people feel the beauty and goodness of socialist life, but "Kiss" only gives people lowly sensual stimulation. "Sincere love" is the love of the whole soul of the loved one, the love of a person, and as seen in many healthy folk-songs and love-songs, attraction by and adoration of the beauty of the whole personality of the other party established in labor and struggle life. Love in "Kiss" runs entirely counter to this. In the poem, what "I" "love" are the "red lips" of a woman, and "like the bee that clings to the essential organ of the rose, I suck honey from your red lips!" Such a "scene" exhibits but a man who is "crazy" for the lips of a woman, and there is basically nothing about the adoration of the internal beauty of the other party. This is the fundamental difference between the love affairs of the laboring people and the bourgeois love affairs, and is where the laboring people are different from the bourgeois in aesthetic view.

In the love life of the laboring people, internal beauty and external beauty are unified, and internal beauty is taken as the most important foundation of a love affair (manifested as a certain demand or condition for the lover in politics, in ideology and in labor; people who think that love is conditional therefore think that beauty has no objective criterion). Therefore, those daring love songs always lead people's feelings upward in pursuit of a noble internal world, lead people to oppose selfish, despicable and filthy sentiments and the dark feudal system, and incite them to make greater effort in labor and fight for the well-being of the people and building socialism.

The foundation of bourgeois love-affairs is bourgeois individualism or personal hedonism. This kind of love viewpoint takes external "beauty"--especially of certain stimulative sense organs (the slender waist, red lips, slender eye-brows, dimples, etc.) as the sole foundation of love, and furthermore, the strength of such stimulation as the criterion of whether or not the love is "sincere." This is precisely the case with "Kiss." In history, all declining classes always lowered love to the level of pure animal impulse, described lewdness and lust as "sincere love," and extolled their decadent life.

Finally, man and woman are on an equal footing in "sincere love," but "Kiss" baldly exhibits the intoxication of a man in enjoyment who regards a woman as the object of enjoyment--"I hold in my hands your face with a pair of dimples as if holding a brimful glass of wine and drinking it to the bottom. I am drunk!" Where is the feeling for your lover whom you regard as your spiritual companion and love fervently?

It is sometimes permissible to write about lovers kissing and embracing each other, but when a socialist youth kisses his lover, he would never regard the "face" of his lover as a "wine glass" to "drink from." The description of the woman as man's tool of enjoyment in this way is precisely the characteristic of what the bourgeoisie calls "love," and is also the ideological foundation that gives rise to all sorts of ugly pornography.

But this kind of lustful description is by no means isolated because it has reared its head in a few poems and novels. After reading the January issue of Chiang-huai Wen-hsüeh, I discovered that a brilliant novelist actually wasted his artistic talent in writing with relish about a CYL cadre intruding into the bathroom of his "lover." When this novelist minutely described to some length the lustful action of how she, "wet all over" put on "a pair of underpants," I really felt embarrassed and worried from the depth of my heart and expressed regret for him.

When you leaf through magazines, besides love poems, you most often find poems portraying scenery. Poems of this kind can be written. What is wrong with writing poems extolling the embellished landscape of the fatherland? Poems portraying scenery have been written in all ages, and we also have seen some very good poems portraying scenery. There is no ground to reject subject matter of this kind.

The question is that when writing lyric poetry, should we simply sing to the breezes and enjoy the moon or give people a feeling of fervent love for the fatherland and the new life? The feeling effused in some poems is not for making people fervently love life but for making them depart from life. When writing about ancient remains, instead of expressing such a strong feeling of the new era as is found in the lines "The bleak and chilly autumn wind is here again, but the world has changed!" "The goddess should be without accident but she would be startled by the changed world!", their melodies are dominated by the mournful and melancholy sentiments of past ages, and reading them makes people feel depressed and sad.

In the January issue of Tung-hai [East Sea] for example, there is a poem entitled "Lotus Flowers in the Dawn" (one of the six poems about the West Lake" written with a flowery language. Its first two stanzas describe the morning scene and night scene of the West Lake, its third stanza extols the West Lake as like "fresh-brewed jade-dew tea in a jade bowl, the essence of morning milk in a rose cup," and its last stanza reads:

Drinking the dew-like tea can give you a longer life
And drinking the essence of the morning milk can make you
shine in good health.
I therefore let loose my seven sense organs,
To drink deep the rich breakfast of the West Lake,
And staggeringly I fell down from drunkenness
Under the shade of a willow by the side of the lake....

In this poem, there is no fervent love deep in the heart for the landscape of the fatherland, and there is only wild drinking and enjoyment to gratify the desire of an individual. The flowery adjectives cannot remedy the emptiness and paleness of the content.

People with the aestheticism of the laboring people may also be impressed differently by the West Lake because of their difference in life experience, and there is one thing in common and that is they would have the sense of happiness, comfort, breeziness and contentedness. There also can be "intoxication," but the intoxication comes from the beautiful scenery of the West Lake. This sense of contentedness and intoxication toward the scenery of the West Lake is linked with the sense of happiness and contentedness of the laboring people due to the fundamental change of their standing. Only a person who fails to find satisfaction in social life and has to go to nature to look for stimulation can engender the aspiration and imagination of "staggeringly I fell down from drunkenness under the shade of a willow by the side of the lake." The reckless and frenzied spiritual state of the bourgeois individualist eulogized has nothing in common with socialist poetry.

To be sure, someone also had eulogized drunkenness by saying that "I value neither the bell and drum nor fine food, and I wish to get drunk all the time and not to stay sober," but he was Li Pai who failed to gain recognition in the T'ang Dynasty more than 1,200 years ago....

Some poems portraying scenery are written in the form of classic poetry. There is nothing against this so long as they can express new ideas. But some poems written in this form are heavily laden with the sentiments of past ages. This gives poetry a gray color and a low-key tune. The "Hangchow Poems" published in Hsin Kuan-ch'a [New Observation], No. 22, 1956, offered a typical example of this kind of poetry portraying scenery.

In the two poems under the title "Reminiscences," the author writes about Lu Yu (陆游) and Pai Chü-i (白居易) in this way:

Where were the garments of Pai Chü-i?
Where were the cloth shoes of Su Tung-po (苏东坡)?
Though they had great ambitions, they reluctantly were obliged
To serve as minor officials in Hangchow!
The long night was sorrowful and exasperating to them
As they were in difficulties all their life,
And they got in return only 4,000 pecks of yellow millet
And 300 lines of verses....

("Reminiscences I")

With a sword tied to his waist and a pen in his pocket,
He covered all the mountains of the Shu State and the
rivers of the Wu State.
With the fatuous in power, all manly ambitions were
suppressed.
There was no way to show gratitude to the state,
And where could he kill the enemy on horseback?

("Reminiscences II")

Can we sense the least bit of flavor of the age from such portrayal? Can we sense a bit of new sentiment of the working class in the socialist poet? No, not a bit. Everything from feeling to image is time-worn. It seems as though the lot of the author himself was the same as that of Lu Yu and Pai Chü-i. Therefore, once he came to Hangchow, he echoed "reminiscence" of these ancient people. By way of "reminiscences," the author vented his shady feelings that were antagonistic to socialism, and used ancient people to satirize metaphorically the contemporary world.

Poems of this kind express the feeling of gloomliness, resentment and discontent against the suppression of those antagonistic forces in the socialist society, and have none of the feeling of happiness and pride of the people in the socialist society who are redolent of past personages. True, those people who represent the declining forces in the socialist society always feel most gloomy, and such gloomy feeling is especially easy to express itself in the form of "reminiscence." Chewing such lines as "the fatuous are in power" and "the long night was sorrowful and exasperating to them," they secretly liken themselves to those ancient people. By way of "satirizing the present with the past," they express their conflict with, hate against and ridicule of the Party leadership and the socialist direction with "travel notes," "fables," "ancient stories" and other forms of writing. They also express at the same time their warm resonance with the thoughts and feelings of the intellectuals of the exploiting classes of past ages. This is a skillful form of class struggle.*

But the world is different today. The present world is the world of the working class and the laboring people, and anyone antagonistic to the world of the working class and the laboring people will in the end be forsaken by the people and history.

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* Note to the second edition: Travel notes, fables, fairy tales and sketches are often neglected by some people. However, when some people want to express more covertly and deviously their opposition to the proletariat and socialism, they often would adopt this form of writing and take "implication" as the mode of struggle by analogizing a small thing to a big thing, something in the distance to something close at hand, and things to people. This is also a kind of experience.

Take also what young poet Shao Yen-hsiang (邵燕祥) wrote in "Recalling the West Lake" for example:

It is not in March with a profusion of flowers and the grass still short,
Nor is it mid-autumn with the fragrance of cinnamon flowers in the air.
The sleet is driving hard, and the cold rain comes through my sleeves,
As the boatwoman laughs at me for my silly enthusiasm thick as wine....
The Pai and Su embankments are as they used to be;
There are green mountains beyond those mountains,
And new buildings beyond those buildings.
From now on there truly will be endless song and dance at West Lake;
Give him back the meter of poetry and give me back my singing voice.

The feeling of this poem is that of a commonplace "gifted scholar" who is divorced from the era and the masses. It gives people the impression of a refined man of letters of the feudal class making a pleasure trip to the lake in time of peace in the past, but basically no impression of the scenery of the new West Lake in the socialist era. It is indeed regrettable that such a poem should have been written by Shao Yen-hsiang who is still rather young....

Piecing together the two conditions mentioned above, we can see that as a hundred flowers blossom in poetry, it appears that a certain important flower does not blossom as luxuriantly as it should be. In the vigorous atmosphere, we can clearly feel that there is a weak and unhealthy undercurrent in composition of poetry. The subject matter is also not broad enough--because the broadest world lies in the ebullient life of the people. Everybody tends to lay greater emphasis on the beauty of slenderness and elegance, and few people go after the beauty of magnificence and splendor--and the latter is most saliently exhibited in this era of ours. The commonwealth of poetry is replete with lovely humming in a low voice and touching love songs. Some poems are strongly tinted with bourgeois individualism, but there are very few militant and bugle-like songs that reflect the mainstream of life.

One poet said: The narrowness of subject matter in poetry is principally that there is only one "mother"--socialist realism. As there are too few "mothers," how can there be variety in poetic style? He advocated that "love" and "kissing" must be described with "enthusiasm" before genuine love poems could appear. I do not intend to discuss socialist realism here, but I must raise once again in this connection a question: Are the things that the poets themselves consider as beautiful truly beautiful? Is what is beautiful to two or three persons in a small circle truly beautiful? If the answer is in the affirmative, then there is no objective criterion in the appraisal of beauty in life and art, and all works with "style" and "personality" are beautiful.

In point of fact, beauty is an objective existence. Broadly speaking, only the life that impels the forward development of history is beautiful life. Since the working class is the most progressive in history and also the class that embodies the direction of historical development, and the class consciousness of the working class is in accord with the laws governing the development of history, the sense of beauty of the working class most truly and fully reflects beauty in life. Because the class consciousness of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is fettered by the idea of private ownership, their aesthetic viewpoint can never reflect the beauty of life in the socialist society. Therefore, if we use the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois feeling to experience life, then because there is a gap between our ideas and sentiments and those of the working class and laboring people, we cannot fully sense and reflect the beauty of life, and would frequently regard lowly and even ugly feelings as genuine beauty and substitute them for the beauty of social life or nature itself.

For instance, the poem "Vegetation" in Hsing-hsing that has been criticized is an example that merits deep thought. A poplar is beautiful because its upright and graceful posture is linked with the strong and brave character of the people in their pursuit of a fine life. Therefore, the broad masses of the people find it beautiful and affectionate. But in the eyes of the author Liu Sha Ho, the poplar assumes this image:

> She stands alone on the plain like a sword glistening with green light pointing upward toward the sky. She may perhaps be uprooted in a storm, but although she dies, she also refuses to bow to anybody.

This is the symbol of a kind of ultra individualism that is solitary and frenziedly arrogant, and is hostile to all things around it when the interest of the individual is not satisfied. In the new society, the people engaged in the building of a new life basically cannot have so strange an impression of the poplar. By arbitrarily ascribing the dark and reactionary individualist feeling in his heart to the poplar, the author has, as a result, distorted the beauty of the poplar.

There are also quite a number of conditions similar to this. For example, when they came to so imposing a construction engineering project as the Sanmen Gorge, some poets were unable to sense the beauty of the life of struggle, and they could only write about the "colored clouds," "flowers," "strolls," "sentiments".... As a result, the Sanmen Gorge in their poem was as tranquil as Arcadia, and there was basically no feeling of the beauty of the bubbling, ebullient militant life. Why? Was there no such beauty in the Sanmen Gorge? No. It was because these poets lacked the profound sentiments of the working class that they failed to notice this heart-stirring beauty.

Can it be said that there is not such kind of beauty that reflects the noble integrity of the revolutionaries in the love life of the laboring people? Of course there is, but because some people lack the healthy sense of

beauty, only kissing and embracing are left. The aesthetic viewpoint of the poets has also a definite bearing on the scarcity of fine poems that extol the city and the factory.

Seen in this light, an effort to acquire the sentiments of the working class and the aesthetic viewpoint of the laboring people and to remold the non-working class component in thought and feeling is of the greatest significance in reflecting beauty in life. In order to enable poetry to reflect even more vigorously the age, apart from going deep into life and creating the national form of art liked by the people, it is most important that poets must be able to conform their own sentiments to those of the laboring people and the working class.

Poetry is the nerve, the bugle-call of the era, the voice of the mind of the people. We need songs that are more clearcut, more vigorous and more militant. We need to have more songsters of the era to inspire the people forward with their fiery poems. How we need the magnificent, strong and optimistic revolutionary feeling that we are proud of in Chairman Mao's poems! How we need poems that are glittering with the radiance of socialist ideas and are rich in national characteristics and the effective power of art! Literature gives reflection to the life of the people, and so far as poetry is concerned, as the most sensitive part of literature, it should be more closely combined with the mainstream of the age. Speaking of art, it can develop to a new and higher level and its life can become perpetual only when the beauty of this era can be more broadly refined in poetry. I really hope that more poets will follow each other along this road!

February 1957

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More on Dogma and Principle

- a debate with Liu Shao-t'ang (刘绍棠) and others

The literary and art circles move rather slowly in the anti-rightist struggle, and it also sounds strange that some self-styled "engineers of the human soul" are aloof and indifferent to those poisonous weeds that poison the soul of the people. Although there have appeared in the periodicals many articles that should be criticized or discussed, yet some people think that they are one hundred percent fragrant flowers. Stirring up trouble with greater smugness, the revisionist trend of thought acts as the loyal lieutenant to the rightists on the offensive.

The revisionists assume the posture of "opponents to dogmatism," but what they attack are the fundamental principles of the Marxist-Leninist thought on literature and art. If we do not criticize and repudiate the revisionist trend of thought in the literary and art sphere today, the anti-rightist struggle will not be launched with great vigor and the rightists will hide themselves behind the guise of "opposing dogmatism." This article is aimed at criticizing and repudiating Liu Shao-t'ang's revisionist theory on a number of theoretical questions.

Concerning the Question of Contradictions in Literary and Art Circles

For a time before this, there has been in circulation such a theory: The contradictions in literary and art circles are principally those between the need of the masses of the people and the inability of literature and art to catch up with the need of the people. Liu Shao-t'ang is an advocate of this theory and he has many supporters. Another allegation is that the contradictions in literary and art circles are principally those between literary and art creation on the one hand, and dogmatism, bureaucratism and sectarianism on the other, and that the principal task of literary and art thought is therefore to oppose dogmatism, bureaucratism and sectarianism in the historical period from now on.

I am of the view, however, that although these two allegations appear superficially to be rather reasonable, yet they are fundamentally wrong.

Literature and art come within the realm of the phenomena of the superstructure, and form a kind of social ideology. They bear a striking class character, and serve different classes and different forms of politics. At the same time, they are a kind of social ideology different in form from other kinds of social ideology (e.g., philosophy). Literature and art have their special character, but this does not reject their common character as a phenomenon of the superstructure, and in point of fact, their common character is manifested precisely through their special character. This also means to say that the class character of literature is precisely the ideology effused in literary and art creations and exhibited in the contention between different kinds of understanding. The class struggle is necessarily reflected in the contention of artistic views.

The contradictions between productive forces and production relations, the contradictions between the foundation and the superstructure, are the fundamental contradictions of socialist society. But the nature of these contradictions is fundamentally different from that of the capitalist society. Due to the great victory of the three major transformations, the economic base of China has undergone a fundamental change, and this fundamental change has been accomplished in rather a short historical period. The fundamental change calls for the conformity of the superstructure, and in that section of the superstructure affiliated to social ideology, this also calls for the ability of the socialist, Marxist ideology to wipe out basically the bourgeois ideology, establishing a socialist ideological system in conformation with the socialist base, and further manifesting the role of the superstructure in the service of the base.

In China, the Marxist ideology occupies the leading position. This is in conformation with the socialist base and actively promotes the consolidation and development of the base. But in the ideological sphere,the bourgeois ideology is still serious, and this is contradictory to the socialist base. Under such a circumstance, in order to bring into play the role of the superstructure in the service of the base, it is necessary to change at a faster rate the old ideology in the superstructure that does not conform with the base and to wage unremitting struggle against all kinds of bourgeois ideology. The more lively and widespread this kind of ideological struggle is, the more it is able to make its strength felt in the theoretical field, and the faster and more thoroughgoing can the Marxist ideology overcome the bourgeois ideology. The implementation of the principle of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend seeks precisely to use the method of debate to develop truth and the method of emulation to develop socialist literature.

Literature and art are also a kind of social ideology. As one of the phenomena of the superstructure, they must in the final analysis serve the base. The fundamental reason that the condition of literature and art cannot fall in step completely with the demand of the base at the present is that the Marxist, socialist ideology, like other kinds of social ideology, has still not been universally established. Therefore, the principal contradiction in the sphere of literature is the contradiction between the socialist road and the capitalist road, the contradiction between the proletarian ideology and the bourgeois ideology, the contradiction between serving the socialist base, socialist politics and the workers, peasants and soldiers on the one hand and serving the bourgeoisie on the other. This contradiction is exhibited in profusion in the ideological struggle ceaselessly carried out in literary and art circles, that is, in the struggle between the Marxist-Leninist literary and art theory and the bourgeois literary and art theory, and the struggle between the proletarian ideology and the bourgeois ideology in creative writing.

A few people develop from the bourgeois ideology to opposing the Party and socialism politically, and this is transformation from contradictions among the people into contradictions between the enemy and ourselves, into

political struggles. The method of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is used to solve the ideological contradictions among the people, but the method of hoeing poisonous weeds is used to solve contradictions between the enemy and ourselves. "The two kinds of contradictions and methods" must be strictly distinguished.

Dogmatism is essentially a form of expression affiliated to the petty-bourgeois ideology. It is opposed to Marxism, and also will impede the development of literary undertakings and especially fetter the lively creative faculty of the people. Therefore, it is imperative to criticize and repudiate dogmatism. As things stand in China, however, dogmatism plays only the role of impeding the development of literature at a certain stage and on a certain question. It has not assumed the proportions of a line, and it often appears in the violent ideological struggle. Throughout the historical period in which the Marxist ideology has still not become the world outlook of the majority, the fundamental contradiction in the sphere of literature and art is not dogmatism, but the contradiction between the socialist road and the capitalist road, between the proletarian ideology and the bourgeois ideology.

There will still be the struggle between the two roads, the two kinds of ideology in literature and art for a long time to come in the whole transition period, and this struggle will sometimes be violent and sometimes mild. Large numbers of anti-socialist poisonous weeds have been hoed away, but those poisonous weeds that have not been removed will inevitably continue to grow and wage struggle against socialism. This is because it takes a long time to transform completely the world outlook of writers and build the proletarian army of writers and artists, and furthermore, since literature is a reflection of social life, the class struggle in society will be reflected through various media in the sphere of literature. If this situation were inadequately understood, we would become slack in the struggle against the bourgeois ideology and would therefore commit serious mistakes.

Because of the biased view on the principal contradiction in the sphere of literature, some people either slacken their struggle against the bourgeois ideology at this stage or estimate that there is no more bourgeois ideology in creative literature and art. Flaunting the signboard of opposing dogmatism, the revisionists deny that there are still class contradictions in literary and art thought. If we are aware of the protracted existence of this fundamental contradiction, we would not on the one hand make a fuss of the present emergence of the right-deviation trend of thought and think that there will be disorder in the country. Instead, we would regard this as a necessary phenomenon that would emerge in the course of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend. On the other hand, we also would not slacken in the least our struggle against the revisionist trend of thought ideologically and theoretically, would regard this as a manifestation of the class struggle, and would be prepared to persevere in the struggle for a long time.

In the following, I intend to discuss a few points of argument--those points of argument with a practical role to play in the creation of literature and art.

Is There Revolution in Literature and Art?

Liu Shao-t'ang rejects a "theoretical" basis of socialist literature by writing that there is only quantitative change "step by step" but no leap in the history of literature. He admits that there is only the relationship of inheritance in literature but denies that there is revolution in literature. He makes a show of philosophic terms in his article but has actually no knowledge of the most fundamental common knowledge of dialectics and the history of social development. He boasts without shame saying:

> Literature and art are different from other social sciences because they possess the most direct and systematic heritable character.
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> The authors of realist classics were opposed to the system of exploitation based on men eating men. They bitterly hated darkness and inequality, were sympathetic with and supported the progressive thought of the people, and were making forward development step by step. A master of the younger generation inherited the high ideology of the master of the older generation, and moved forward with the last footprint of the latter as the starting point. Consequently, realism gradually engendered socialist factors and its socialist nature also gradually developed. Lu Hsün and Gorky played precisely the role of carrying on past traditions and opening up a way for those who followed. Although they were not communists at their times, yet due to the development of society, they had given realism the socialist blood.
>
> But in the study of life and the practice of art creation, these founders of the socialist nature in realism felt that many problems were foggy, and they felt the need of a truly scientific philosophy to explain life. They therefore accepted Marxism.*

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* "The Development of Realism in the Socialist Era."

Like drinking that can make a person talk nonsense beyond the comprehension of sober people, arrogance can make the thought of a person so preposterous that there is no way to understand him. The passage cited sounds as though there was already the socialist nature in literature prior to the birth of Marxism, and that before there was the scientific socialist thought in the world, the "blood" of scientific socialism had already flowed in the realist literature and art of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This example cannot be found in any history of literature.

The socialist thought of Lu Hsün and Gorky in literature was not the result of the natural development of realism in the past. They critically inherited the fine cultural legacy of the past in history, but the reason of their development to become the vanguard of socialist literature was quite clear: In the case of Gorky, it was the outcome of his accepting Marxism-Leninism under the leadership of Comrade Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, and in the case of Lu Hsün, it was the outcome of his proceeding from the theory of evolution to the class theory under the leadership of the Party and the driving force of the class struggle. It was precisely because of this that we generally divided the ideological development of Lu Hsün into the first and second stages. Unless all facts are obliterated, we cannot say that Lu Hsün already had "socialist blood" at the time of writing the "Hot Wind" series of miscellaneous articles and that because he found life somewhat "foggy," he later accepted Marxism.

As to the allegation that the whole of China's new literature contained the socialist factor and was developing in the direction of socialism, then it was not the "footprint" of "realism" among the previous "masters of art" that gave birth to socialism in the 20th century. As was pointed out by Chairman Mao, because the democratic revolution of China was led by the proletariat, the guiding thought of China's new literature movement was not bourgeois democratism but the communist ideology and the theory of social revolution. Because of this, there was also the socialist factor in the literature of the new democratic revolution period. Without the Marxist ideology, there would never be any genuine socialist nature and socialist blood in literature, and the old realist literature is the outcome of creation guided by the Marxist ideology, and is also the outcome of the integration of revolutionary artists with the workers, peasants and soldiers.

The existence of revolution in literature is basically negated by Liu Shao-t'ang in this statement. He holds that the development of literature is merely an evolutionary form of quantitative change, with "a master of the succeeding generation inheriting the mantle of a master of the older generation." With the "genius of a writer" succeeded by another "writer of genius" in this way, the socialist nature gradually evolves in abstract "realism." For the sake of opposing revolution in literature, he especially emphasizes "the most direct and systematic heritability."

To be sure, there is heritability in literature, but we must critically inherit all of the excellent legacy left us by history, and only those people of the Hu Feng counterrevolutionary clique nihilistically reject the legacy

of the past. The proletariat pays greater attention to the excellent legacy of the past than any class in history. It regards as treasure the literary and art legacy of the past which had been oppressed, discriminated against and was even on the brink of disappearance in the feudal society and the capitalist society. Such legacy has been put in order, studied and published so that it can be circulated among the people and enjoyed by the broad masses of the people. Only by using the proletarian world outlook--Marxist-Leninist ideology--to study critically the legacy of the past can the essence be unearthed and the reactionary dross discarded on a new ideological plane unknown before.

However, the socialist literature of the proletariat is different from all literature of the past in fundamental nature. It is a great revolution marking the development of history to the revolutionary era of the proletariat in the history of literature. It is brand-new literature making a clean break with the influence of all old, feudal, capitalist ideologies. It must draw a sharp line of demarcation in class and ideology with all of the legacy of the past.

Only by way of scientific Marxist criticism and repudiation can we truly absorb the excellent things in the legacy for our use. Such scientific criticism and repudiation is a kind of revolution on the ideological front. It is basically wrong to look upon inheritance as something having not the least relationship with the revolution. It is not the influence of the "great masters" of the past but the revolutionary task advanced by the class struggle in the new historical stage that gives rise to revolution in literature. Seen in the light of the relationship of social existence with social consciousness, the revolution in literature reflects and also give impetus to the revolution in the political and economic fields. In the history of social development there is revolution in mode of production and in political system; in the history of literature, there is also corresponding revolution in literature. During the various colossal ideological struggles after liberation and the present anti-rightist struggle, the socialist revolution has been most profound on the literary front. The negation of revolution means the negation of dialectics. The negation of the revolutionary nature of socialist literature by Liu Shao-t'ang is philosophically a metaphysical thought opposed to dialectics, politically the thought based on the theory of evolution that negates the development of society through revolution, and in literature the intention to replace proletarian literature with bourgeois literature in its original form.

Apparaising China's History of Literature

The development of new literature in China and its growth to maturity have gone through an arduous and glorious road. The publication of Chairman Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" was a milestone on the long way of development of Chinese literature. After this forum, the proletarian literature of China grew vigorously to maturity under the guidance of the clearcut orientation of literature toward the workers, peasants and soldiers. Therefore, the question of understanding and appraising the

literature movement after the Yenan forum on literature and art is a question of understanding and appraising the orientation of literature and art toward the workers, peasants and soldiers.

How does Liu Shao-t'ang understand the significance of such "Talks" and how does he appraise the achievements of the literature movement of China after the publication of the "Talks"?

> I am of the view that Chairman Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" contains two component parts, one being the theory of strategy for guiding the literary and art movement at the time, the other, the programmatic theory for guiding the literary and art undertaking in the long run.

He thinks that because of the rather arduous environment of the war of resistance against Japan at the time, Chairman Mao in his "Talks" called on writers and artists "to write opportunely works that directly served the war of resistance against Japan. Even though such works were nothing more than tiles and bricks and even rocks, so long as they could deal blows to the enemy, they were all right." Deduced on this basis, he thinks that "in order to serve politics, literature and art of the time must necessarily be symbolized in their serving the policies and regulations. The plays staged by the propaganda teams and cultural work teams of the armed forces and various local professional and amateur troupes were in most cases works written on the basis of a certain propaganda theme. 'Brothers and Sisters Reclaim Land' was probably a representative of such works." Following this, he makes an extremely nihilist appraisal to negate all the achievements of the literary and art movement in the war of resistance against Japan and in the liberation war:

> Because the life reflected in these works had a time-table to follow and because the writers had to rush them out in a short time, the artistic character of these works was rather poor and their ideological character was also rather localized, the overwhelming majority of these works had not long an artistic life, and few of them could be preserved....
>
> During the period of the people's liberation war, although there were some changes, yet the main aspects were no different from the period of the war of resistance against Japan.

Speaking bluntly, Liu Shao-t'ang's understanding is that from the period of the war of resistance up to the liberation of China, new literature of the liberated areas oriented toward the workers, peasants and soldiers was close to a piece of blank paper.

If we were not too forgetful, we would remember that the same note had also been struck when China was just liberated. It was said that the works of the liberated areas were too crude and too poor in artistic character and that their portrayal of the workers, peasants and soldiers was unsuitable to the taste of urban readers....Their intention was to remove from our big garden of literature and art the literature of the workers, peasants and soldiers that had just grown to maturity on the new soil, and to put literature and art in the service of the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie. That ideological struggle was also rather violent. After a lapse of seven or eight years, the same note has been revived in a borrowed corpse with greater thoroughness than in the past, and the spearhead is directed straight at Chairman Mao's "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art."

The division of Chairman Mao's "Talks" into two parts--the "programmatic part" and the "strategic part"--is a very big distortion. Chairman Mao's "Talks" is a whole. It proceeds on the one hand from the historical conditions (resistance against Japan) of the literary and art movement of the time, and on the other hand from the ideological conditions within literary and art circles--the overwhelming majority were petty-bourgeois intellectuals. In this connection, the key to the solution of putting literature and art in the service of politics--in the service of the general objective of the war of resistance against Japan--lay in solving the contradictionswithin literary and art circles--the contradictions between the proletarian ideology on the one hand and the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology on the other. Chairman Mao most unambiguously stated that the key to implementing the orientation toward the workers, peasants and soldiers lay in the ideological remolding of writers and artists--remolding their stand and thoughts and feelings. This also means to say that only in the course of gradually studying Marxism, going deep into the life of the workers, peasants and soldiers, carrying out ideological remolding of self--only in the course of gradually establishing the superiority of the Marxist ideology in the sphere of literature and art--can genuine proletarian literature and art grow to maturity, serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and translate theoretical knowledge into genuine practice.

Does the advancement of these questions with some fundamental character mean that writers no longer need to pay attention to the artistic character? No person can come to such a conclusion unless he deliberately seeks to distort things. Chairman Mao has clearly stated that the political character and the artistic character should be unified and that the political criteria should be given first place and regarded as criteria for gauging works of art. He has also stated that "we should carry out the struggle between the two lines on the question of literature and art." In no place has he said that writers should use their works to illustrate and explain our policies, but has on the contrary stated that "Marxism can only contain but cannot take the place of realism in literary and art creation." It is vain to try to look for the theoretical basis of formulation and conceptualization in the "Talks." "The policy of the Party is the life of the Party," and since literary and art work must have a correct political content, they must of course embody the policy of the Party. Because all our revolutionary undertakings are developed under the guidance of Party policies, the most

fundamental laws in life cannot be understood without proceeding from the policy viewpoint. As to the subsequent narrow interpretation by some people that serving politics means graphically explaining every local concrete policy without proceeding from life and without reflecting life through typifying images, this is an erroneous interpretation and has nothing to do with the "Talks."

However, the essence of the question raised by Liu Shao-t'ang does not lie here. The essence of the question he raises is that literary and art works draw too much material from the fiery struggle and are too closely integrated with reality. In another place he says: "Man's social being determines his consciousness. As forms of ideas, literature and art can only reflect--that is also to say, create--things that have emerged and come into being in life....Consequently, literary and art creation necessarily must lag behind the development of life." This clearly shows his intention: During the liberation war and the war of resistance against Japan, because emphasis was laid on putting literature and art in the service of politics, many writers were bent on "hastily" and "opportunely" portraying the realistic life of the time. Consequently, very few things were left behind. Here lies the "implication" of his so-called "serving the policy."

The brewing, conception, creation and revision of literary and art works take time. Nobody denies this. But the length of time needed varies with conditions. Some projects need longer time, but because of deep impressions, they also can be completed in a shorter time. By plunging themselves into the heat of the storm whipped up by the laboring people bent on transforming the world in the hard times of the liberation war and the war of resistance against Japan, the hearts of the writers were filled with excitement, emotions and the sense of responsibility toward the Party and the revolutionary cause. They yearned to reflect this great era and portraying the heroic features of the laboring people. They took up their pens and swiftly and opportunely produced works saturated with excitement. Could it be said that this should not be encouraged? Apart from those "geniuses" who advocate art for art's sake, nobody could have reproached the writers for having taken the wrong course! Because literary and art works of this period were closely integrated with the realistic struggle, they were strong in life, and their national style and popular form were liked by the people. Their healthy and plain feelings have given rise to works that will forever be reserved in the history of literature, and have left behind a completely new page that can never be obliterated in the new history of literature.

Let us see what are the works whose "artistic life is not long" and whose ideological character and artistic character are "rather poor" as Liu Shao-t'ang claims.

Speaking of novels, there have appeared Chao Shu-li's (赵树理) "Hsiao Erh Hei Marries," "Story of Li Yu-ts'ai," and "Changes in Lichiachuang," K'ang Cho's (康濯) "My Two Landlords," Liu Ch'ing's (柳青) "Story of Corn Planting," Ou-yang Shan's (欧阳山) "Kao Kan-ta," Chou Li-po's (周立波) "Tempest," Ma Chia's (馬加) "Ten Days at Chiangshan Village," Liu Pai-yü's (刘白羽) "The Conflagration of War Spreads"

and "Fire Ahead"....In addition, there are many excellent short novels and features stories such as "Anecdotes of Norman Bethune," "Pai Yang Tien," etc.

Speaking of poems, there are Li Chi's (李季) "Wang Kuei and Li Hsiang-hsiang," Yüan Chang-ching's (阮章竞) "Water of the Chang River," Li P'ing's (李冰) "Chao Ch'iao-erh," collections of bucolics, Chang Chih-min's (张志民) "Never Say Die," and many excellent short poems emerging among the masses.

We also have "White-Haired Girl," "Liu Hu-lan," "Blood Feud," and many excellent plays.

In music, we have the immortal great piece "Huang Ho Ensemble." This was an immortal epic created with the most robust spirit that knew no precedent in history, with the most profound class and national feelings and with the language of music for the descendants of the Chinese nation. It portrayed the war of resistance against Japan. It might be inadequate and "lag behind reality," but the earth-shaking fighting strength in this ensemble was drawn precisely from the realities of the war of resistance against Japan at that time.

I could give a long list, but this is sufficient. From this, it is already sufficient to see how baseless is Liu Shao-t'ang's appraisal of the literary and art movement of this period in the liberated areas.

This is not all, because the literary and art movement of this period has two other factors that play the fundamental role in the literary undertakings of China.

First, among these works, there have emerged for the first time in the history of literature many clearcut images of workers, peasants and soldiers--the masters of our era. They are not the images of people who are workers, peasants and soldiers in look but petty-bourgeois intellectuals at heart; they are the images of genuine workers, peasants and soldiers with the hearts of the laboring people. If it is said that realist literature is not "skill," that has not changed a bit from time immemorial but is developing incessantly with the development of times, if it is said that the development of literature lies in its incessant portrayal of the images and spiritual outlook of various types of characters of succeeding ages, if it is said that the advanced literature of every age takes the unearthing and reflection of the spirit of the age and the manifestation of the advanced trend of thought of the age as the precondition, then the socialist literature guided by the Marxist world outlook necessarily calls for the reflection of the life of the workers, peasants and soldiers, the creation of the models of the laboring people, since only such portrayal can truly serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, and manifest to the full extent the powerful life force of socialist literature.

Every class wants to create heroes of its own class in literature, and the bourgeoisie has created works portraying the bourgeois heroes during the revolutionary period. The historical mission of socialist literature is to portray emphatically the image of the new laboring people who have grown to maturity in struggle.

Realism of the past has left for us many typical characters of past ages, but has not left for us the images of the revolutionary workers and peasants, the images of the revolutionary fighters of the proletariat. Nor can it create such images. Such people are precisely the masters of our great era, and if this section of people is absent in the garden of literature, socialist literature will be localized in an extremely small sphere, and its life force will shrink. Therefore, the creation of the models of the laboring people, the creation of model revolutionary fighters of the proletariat who have strong communist ideals and are advancing ceaselessly is demanded for the further development of socialist literature itself. The literary and art creation of the liberated areas in the periods of the war of resistance against Japan and the liberation war was a good beginning, and it laid down the foundation for the post-liberation literary and art movement. We should fully appraise its historical significance.

Second, this period has fostered many new writers. Even though they were unable to write excellent works at the time, yet they have subsequently written extraordinarily good works. Many writers who wrote excellent works after liberation had begun their literary activities back in the period of the liberation war. Following Chairman Mao's instruction concerning the orientation of literature and art, they plunged themselves heart and soul for a long time into the life of the laboring people, and it was also precisely because of this period of life that they were subsequently able to create such excellent works. If instead of plunging themselves into the heat of the struggle the writers sought "improvement" behind closed doors in order to "create" what Liu Shao-t'ung calls "great" works, then the number of good works which we are able to keep today is truly open to doubt.

Now, let us return to what is called the question of "strategy." The historical conditions of today have given rise to fundamental changes compared with the historical conditions of the period of the war of resistance against Japan. This is affirmative. Is there any fundamental change in the ideological outlook of the intellectuals today? The great majority of them have become intellectuals supporting socialism, and this is a change. But the bourgeois ideology still exists to varying extent in the world outlook of the majority of them, and there is no fundamental change in this regard.

In the earth-shaking great changes, the conditions of their ideology lagging behind reality are even more prominent than in the Yenan days. Many people who were ideologically prepared for the democratic revolution lack ideological preparation for the socialist revolution. Therefore, ideological remolding, leading a life deep among the workers, peasants and soldiers, forming one with the masses, studying Marxism-Leninism...are still not "out of date" and are still effective. These revolutionary traditions of the proletariat in literature and art, including the style of leading a hard and plain

life, wholeheartedly serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, and serving the present revolutionary struggle--a style described by some people as the "style of the cultural work corps"--form the life-blood of revolutionary literature and art and must be brought to the fore and brought into play today.

The conditions of today are marked not by too tight a combination between literature and reality. On the contrary, literature is too far removed from the life of the laboring people, and there are too few writers who live deep among the laboring for a long time. We ought to inherit and develop the past excellent tradition of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers and swiftly reflecting the struggle underway, inherit and develop the spirit of sharing weal and woe with the laboring people, but can never weaken such traditions. If these principles were neglected or abandoned, then great danger would arise in the development of China's literature.

The correct road is to get rid of the restrictions of dogmatism on the one hand and to cling unswervingly to things that have been proved to be correct in history. Some people say that all these things are already "shopworn," so why talk about them again? I say they are easily forgotten by some people because they are "shopworn." Some people detest them and they try to get rid of them in the name of "opposing dogmatism." Therefore, it is not unnecessary to mention this again at the proper time.

Concerning "Writing About Reality"

Over the last twelve months, if it were said that there was any theory that swept over the country for a time, then it was "writing about reality." The guiding thought in literature and art of "A Young New-Comer from the Department of Organization" by Wang Meng (王蒙) and "On the Cliff" by Teng Yu-mei (邓友梅) was to "write about reality." A good number of talented young writers I contacted also advanced the slogan of "writing about reality." They were of the view that the task of literature and art was "to explore all contradictions in human mind" and that "what is real is touching to people."

Liu Shao-t'ang suggests: "In order to inherit the tradition of realism, it is imperative to be true and loyal to the reality of life. This kind of loyalty to the reality of life is loyalty to the reality of contemporary life, and one should not whitewash life and change the true look of life in the name of 'revolutionary development of reality'." How to be "loyal"? This expert in dialectics suggests: One should be loyal to the reality of life by seeing 'motion' in 'rest.' But such loyalty is based first on 'rest' and not on 'motion'."

In his article in the Wen-hui Pao, Tu Li-chün (杜黎均) holds that the question of creating new heroes "lies in the final analysis in writing about reality and creating the real character of the heroes." If we look through the magazines all over the country, we'll find quite a number of themes based on the central slogan of taking "portrayal of reality" as the method of creation. Many other theories also rest on this cornerstone.

This slogan of "writing about reality" was a slogan procured by Hu Feng from the revisionists of other countries. The object of this slogan was to distort the reality of literature and art (the means) as "writing about reality" (the objective), to oppose the intention of literature and art to take the education of the people with the socialist spirit as their own task," to oppose the use of literature and art to serve politics. They regarded this question of art--reality in the image of art--as the sole object of literary and art creation and a substitute to the political question of whom literature and art should serve. Another objective of this slogan was to oppose ideological remolding as though anything "writing about reality" naturally would have an ideological character. This was a swindle in all respects. The fact that revisionists of all hues played once again Hu Feng's old tune during this period showed precisely that their literary and art thought was essentially of one and same system of Hu Feng's, and what they opposed with this slogan of "writing about reality" were precisely those fundamental principles of proletarian literature and art that Hu Feng vilified as the "five knives."

Socialist works of literature naturally should reflect the reality of life. They should not whitewash life, but they also should not distort life. The scenes of life exhibited in literary works and the characters appearing in literary works should preserve all vividness and richness inherent in life. When a reader reads a book page after page, he can lead his own mind into a real realm of life. Therefore, after reading the book to the end, he would feel as though he has gone through a certain kind of life, and would get a course of education in truth from the lively image of art exhibited. (At present, some people are very much opposed to the use of the word "education" and they label it as "dogmatism," but I still use it at the risk of being condemned by them.) If the reader feels that the story in the book is fictitious and the author adopts the attitude of shunning certain contradictions, he at once would feel indifferent to the book and he would not become emotional.

But what is called reality? What objective should we cherish and what stand should we take to portray reality? How can reality be attained?

Everybody uses his own eyes to observe the world and thinks of the world with his own mind. The impressions of art are forever refracted by the viewpoint of the writer. The "reality" reflected by different viewpoints is at variance, or is the same in some places and different in other places. Every writer always takes a certain stand (in class society, this means taking a certain class stand) to observe life, people and things. The life he portrays is precisely what he observes from the angle engendered by his stand. When a capitalist is observed from the stand of the working class, his "reality" is of dual character. But Chang Nai-ch'i (章乃器) who takes the bourgeois stand to observe the capitalists arbitrarily says that the bourgeoisie has no dual character, and thinks on the contrary that the allegation of the dual character of the bourgeoisie is not in correspondence with the "reality of life." In the eyes of the laboring people, "the leadership of the Party means the world of the working class, in other words, the world of the people." But Ch'u An-p'ing (儲安平) vilifies the leadership

of the Party as "the world of the Party," and everything in his eyes is sectarianism. In the eyes of the proletariat, the ultra-individualism of the bourgeois intellectuals is fragile and reactionary. If we truthfully delineate such an intellectual, we would see through the reactionary, fragile and wavering nature of his fanatic character, and would criticize and repudiate him. But seen from the bourgeois stand, such fanaticism is "heroic" and "militant," and even the "inheritance of the 'May 4' tradition." If such a stand is taken to "truthfully" create the image of an intellectual, he would be portrayed as a hero in the wave, and even his mistake would be described as a "tragic but heroic" defeat, thus making the work conspicuously reactionary. "Vegetation" for example is the "reality" of the new society in the eyes of Liu Sha-ho (流沙河).

Some people will ask: Has "reality" any objective criterion?

My answer is in the affirmative.

Life is developing, is "in motion" and is never "at rest." We should see what is called "reality" with the viewpoint based on motion and development. The reality in works of art should reflect the orientation of social development, should be in correspondence with the laws governing the course of development of history, and should reflect the essential aspect of the course of history through typical images. What Liu Shao-t'ang calls the need to observe life with the "at rest" viewpoint is an artistic viewpoint that dares not face the realistic, dying and declining social force.

There is a continuous inflow of new-born force into as well as a continuous outflow of declining force from the stage of history. Any social influence that is still developing in life is also the social influence representing the new-born force. Its ideal is in accord with the laws governing the development of life and its viewpoint is also constantly more adaptable to the reality of life. Those reactionary, declining forces in history always dare not face truth. Therefore, their viewpoint constantly adopts the attitude of distorting, shunning and covering up the reality of life.

Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in (曹雪芹) used the eyes of Chia Pao-yü and Lin Tai-yü to observe the people and things, rights and wrongs in the Grand Garden. He created an extraordinarily real picture of society. If he used the eyes of Mother Chia and Pao-ch'ai to observe people and things, rights and wrongsin the Grand Garden, Pao-yü would have been portrayed as a genuine idiot, and Tai-yü would have been described as a biting, shamless "wanton girl." This was of course not true although the author might subjectively think he was loyal to life.

Therefore, in order to write about reality, the writer must be required to take the stand of the social group that is in accord with the direction of development of life. Only a revolutionary brain can reflect the reality of the revolution. In the era of socialist revolution, the proletariat is in complete accord with the direction of development of history. When a writer is impressed by things in the same way as the proletariat (this does not obstruct in the least the unique style, unique thinking and unique observation

of the writer), in other words, when he takes the proletarian stand to reflect life, his impressions of the reality and the reality of the art created by him in accordance with such impressions are best able to tally with the reality of life itself. Proletarian literature is literature richest in revolutionary ideals and is also the most truthful literature.

As things stand in China, there are contradictions in the minds of many writers. Having learned some Marxism, they strongly hope to learn more, and strive to use the Marxist viewpoint to explore the complex internal world and social life and personalities. But they are also imbued with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology to varying extent, and such ideology always moves around in their minds and wants to express itself through their pens. Such a contradiction would continue to exist for a fairly long time. Because they are not accustomed to observing life and comprehending people and things with the stand of the working class, because their understanding of the new life is not deep and because they must suppress certain bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sentiments within them (such sentiments are often combined with the artistic impressions of the writers), they often stand things on their head in the practice of creative writing, and instead of using the Marxist ideology to dissect life, they abandon the impressions of images to simplify life.

Under the influence of the revisionist trend of thought, some people have an erroneous comprehension of the causes that give rise to formulation and conceptualization. They often regard the thing that they are deficient in (Marxist ideology) as redundant and oppose it. They think that all these defects are the outcome of "adding" the detestable Marxist ideology. If there were no Marxist ideology, wouldn't there be greater freedom? In this way, the Marxist ideology which was originally used to criticize and repudiate their bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas and sentiments is also opposed and rid of as "the restriction of dogmatism." Therefore, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois sentiments that are resident in and familiar to them and have not been thoroughly uprooted also come into action, and in the course of "writing about reality," they take the place of Marxist observation.

Apart from a section of people who have completely and consciously capitulated to the bourgeois thought in literature and art and have produced poisonous weeds that are fundamentally reactionary, there are also a number of writers who have contradictions in their minds. They are deeply influenced by the bourgeois thought in literature and art, but still bear in mind in the abstract a number of Marxist-Leninist principles. The two are incessantly in struggle in their minds. Sometimes, even though the bourgeois ideas and sentiments have actually played the dominant role, some writers still subjectively hope that they are able to conform to certain correct principles. This finds expression in the fact that apart from the mistakes, these works also contain a section that gives a more correct portrayal, but such portrayal is often abstract, conceptive and impotent. Thus, while the writers are in pursuit of advancement, they are in retrogression in important places.

Some critics think that since this is "exploration," such terms as "class ideology" should not be used and the method of class analysis should be abandoned. If this course were followed, we would not be able to understand the essential causes of the complex contradiction in ideology in certain works.

Isn't it true that we often analyze the contradictions in the world outlook of the classic writers as reflected in their works? In point of fact, such contradictions are also found among contemporary writers and will exist for a long time to come. But this condition requires us to learn to make more correct and forceful use of Marxism and not to overthrow Marxist criticism. When making concrete analysis of various works, we must publicize again and again that the reality of art can never be traded with retrogression in thought and only uninterrupted advancement can bring us to a high degree of reality. If we think that criticism is unnecessary so long as we "write about reality," if we do not proceed from the Marxist ideology to make a careful and all-round analysis of the shortcomings and mistakes in some works, then the bourgeois ideology would be allowed to run amuck in creative writing. This is tantamount to abandoning the task of propagating the Marxist ideology and of firmly adhering to the Marxist principles, and as a result, the literary understanding would develop in the bourgeois direction. This kind of Right opportunist thinking is extremely wrong. In the course of opposing dogmatism and promoting the blossoming of a hundred flowers together, Liu Shao-t'ang and some other persons have essentially removed the "soul" from this ideological struggle.

This slogan of "writing about reality" is wrong in another respect in that it would lead toward the naturalistic recording of the superficial phenomena of life or some facts of very shallow ideological significance. (By the way, I do not agree with Tu Li-chün's allegation that there is no naturalism in contemporary literature, but I am not going to discuss this here for the time being.) Not every event that has truly occurred in life is of aesthetic and typical significance. Since literary creation goes through the process of selection, refining and processing, it should be higher, more ideal, more typical and more beautiful than everyday life.

A widow quarreled with her neighbor for two hours because she lost a cake of soap. Two students exchanged blows in the street because of a fountain pen. An old man suddenly died of an acute disease....All these are events in everyday life, and if such events are not linked with other things and are used in isolation to "write about reality," to write feature stories or novels, how can they impress people? Reality is lifeless if it is not linked with strong ideals. What is used by socialist literature to impress people and to inspire them move forward if it has neither communist ideals nor a far-seeing style? Reality is valuable only when it can use the picture of advancement of the era and revolutionary truth deeply to rock our souls. To achieve this, reality should not merely be superficial reality, but should be reality that conforms to the internal laws of life. Like the brush of a painter, the pen of writer must purify and re-create life.

The rightists and revisionists have their political objective in desperately promoting the "portrayal of reality." They use this slogan as the basis of what they call the theory of "revealing the seamy side." The revisionists are opposed to us in stand. What is "darkness" in their eyes is light in ours. As they see it, the dictatorship of the proletariat, democratic centralism, the unity of opposites in the form of discipline and

freedom,the achievements of socialist construction...are all "dark," and in order to "write about reality," it is imperative to describe our undertakings as a mass of pitch darkness "devoid of light." Under their pens, the term "writing about reality" is a synonym for vilifying socialism and attacking the leadership of the Party. As they see it, all works that eulogize the victory of socialism and the proletarian heroes are as a rule "unreal," "false" and "opposed to realism." As a matter of fact, however, it is none other than they themselves that have in every way taken the road of distorting reality and opposing realism. If not even the mainstream is seen in realistic life, how can there be any talk of realism? We must thoroughly expose this vicious design in the political field and must never be fooled by it.

Wang Meng's confession in the Jen-min Jih-pao concerning his own creation "A Young New-Comer from the Department of Organization" is of help to us in understanding the mistake of the slogan of"writing about reality."

> The author has too much confidence in his own sense of art. He thinks that the best thing he can do for the reading public is to rely on such sense of art to revive loyally and courageously all types of personalities and contradictions in life....But the author has strung out from this some erroneous ways of thinking. The author thinks that once there is the reality of life, there surely will be the socialist spirit. In point of fact, he does not go consciously to pursue the socialist spirit, as though the impressions of realistic art can take the place of proletarian stand, viewpoint and methodology, as though such things are essential only at the time of writing policy essays, but not in the writing of novels....Actually, this also seeks to sever the socialist spirit from life and to "canonize" in isolation the "reality of life."
>
> When we are divorced from Marxist consciousness and disarmed ideologically, can the reality of life reappear with "less restrictions"? No, the sad lessons learned have given me the negative answer a hundred times....After we are relieved of the conscious, powerful ideological weapon of Marxism-Leninism, the spontaneous, hidden petty-bourgeois (or other erroneous) ideas and sentiments are bound to come into function, and such functioning is sadly damaging to the reality of life.

Haven't we learned a most profound lesson from this statement? Regardless of whether the recurrence of life or the creation of heroes are concerned, it is inadequate merely to "write about reality." We must proceed from the Marxist viewpoint before we can write about true reality; and we must proceed from the Marxist viewpoint to write about reality before the rich, complex and contradiction-ridden realistic life can be reproduced in art. Life is the flesh and blood of socialist literature and the Marxist ideology is the soul of socialist literature. The liquidation of the Marxist

ideology also means the liquidation of socialist literature. Aimless discussion of reality and loyalty to life in departure from the Marxist ideology and the stand of the working class is a means of bourgeois literature and art to oppose putting literature and art in the service of proletarian politics. It is the most important condition for all writers, who want to reflect life truthfully, to exert themselves in the study of Marxism and the continuation of ideological remolding.

What Is the "Most Acute and Prominent Question" Today?

In his article Liu Shao-t'ang states: "The most acute and prominent question today is to entreat the writers to explore and go after with utmost effort the best possible form of art--in other words, artistic quality, affecting power of art, because this is precisely the focal point of contradictions within the people's literary and art undertaking reflected in present-day works."

Liu Shao-t'ang has not made any analysis in his own article to discuss and prove this point of argument, and consequently, I have no idea of what is the basis of this argument. However, there are other articles sharing his viewpoint. For example, the article "Opposing the Distortion of Chairman Mao's Talks on the Question of Literature and Art" by the Wen-hui Pao commentator published on June 3 holds a similar viewpoint. It is of the view that while politics was emphasized and art neglected in the past, the central question now is to deal with art as art.

I do not deny that simultaneously with strengthening the political character of works, we should pay attention to artistry. It is wrong to say art is politics or politics is art. We should continue with the struggle between the two lines as pointed out by Chairman Mao. We must study more intensively the method of creation, and the shoddy works should be given the necessary criticism. But I am unable to agree that this is the fundamental question at the moment. I hold that the fundamental question of today in the literary undertaking remains to be the old one: Go deep into life and ideological remolding--including the improvement of one's own ideological level.

Life is the source of creation. There is not a single first-rate work of art which is not produced on the basis of profound life. The uninterrupted development of literature also calls for the uninterrupted reflection of the new life in works. As far as some writers in contact with me are concerned, all of them share the feeling that the urgent need is to get rid of certain work at the higher level and to spend a longer time living deep among the people so as to understand and feel out the life and sentiments of the laboring people. Some writers have written much of the life of the past, but because they lack concrete understanding of the new and fast-changing reality, they have become somewhat stagnant in creative writing. Because some writers have not a deep-going understanding of the new life, the reality reflected through their eyes is without strength and conceptualized.

"Why must you mention again going deep into life? If we write about the life experience of the past, can it be said that we also must go deep into life?" Some people (for example Mr. Yao Hsueh-yin) would loudly chide me. It is true that under the orientation of serving the workers, peasants and soldiers, every writer may freely choose his own subject matter in creative writing. But freedom is conditional. Not every writer has a "past" that can be used as literary material. A section of writers have such a past, for example Comrade Liang Pin (梁斌) who has condensed his protracted participation in the peasants' revolutionary movement in the past into the illustrious "Song of the Red Flag." There is for example Li Chieh-jen (李劼人), a senior writer who has devoted all his energy to a long volume that portrays the intellectuals of past ages. This is of course highly treasured and merits our welcome. But there is also a section of writers whose past life is confined only to a very narrow circle, and they can only continue their "artistic life" by spending a long time deep in the new life to get acquainted with and understand the new life. They need most to go deep into life. There is also a section of young writers who were able to write some good works in the past because of their fresh and forceful contact with life. But they have since parted with the fiery struggle and have gradually alienated themselves from the advanced life, thus also sensing the exhaustion of the source of creation. One way to solve this question is to continue with going into life.

This is not all, because going deep into life is inseparable from ideological remolding.

Since writers must cultivate people with their own works and infuse their own ideas and sentiments into people, the ideological remolding of writers should be more urgent than any other intellectuals. Especially under the circumstance that the socialist revolution has basically been accomplished economically, the exposure of the contradiction between the old ideology and the new economic base is especially acute. The daily developing socialist economic base necessarily calls for socialist literature moving in step with it under the guidance of the Marxist ideology, the uninterrupted strengthening of ideology and artistry in literary and art creation, and the ability of each writer to remold consciously his non-proletarian ideas.

The policy of letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend seeks precisely to resort to reasoning and emulation to bring prosperity to socialist culture, and is never aimed at liquidating the ideological struggle. In literary and art circles, there are not only anti-communist, anti-socialist and anti-people rightists who don the mantle of writers and work deliberately for the overthrow of the leadership of the Party. Literary and art circles are also thick with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas that have been exhibited in concentration in the course of "blossoming" and "contention." A protracted and delicate ideological struggle is called for to overcome the bourgeois ideas, and the most important method is to go deep into the life of the laboring people. Only direct participation in productive labor and the class struggle can change in the true sense one's ideas and sentiments. Aimless discussion of theory cannot

sense the weal and woe of the laboring people. We should learn from experience how the workers and peasants live and work, how they view the new society and how they feel within. By comparing theirs with our own selfish sentiments, our lofty and pure thinking based on individualism and our discrepancy with the new life to varying degrees in this way, we would deeply feel how ignominious the bourgeois ideology is and would draw closer to the laboring people.

As things stand in creative writing today, is the lack of artistry or the weakness of ideology the "most acute question" in the final analysis? I think it is the latter and not the former. From some poems and short novels that lead to contention, we can see that their authors have considerable artistic talent, are not estranged from life, and are unique in the mastery of language, in the delineation of scenes, in novelty of conception and in sharpness of sensation. But it is a pity that because their ideological level is not high, they have been unable to give their works of art the due depth, or have caused life to be distorted thus weakening the ideological character of their works. In a greater number of cases, due to restrictions in ideology, the works created can only be localized on the surface of life by merely giving pursuit to the affecting portrayal of phenomena, but cannot daringly and penetratingly see through the complex contradictions inside life, thus losing the bearings in front of contradictions and affecting the development of their authors. This kind of restriction in the ideological level is similarly found in some young writers from among workers and peasants.

With the historical period of building socialism viewed as a whole, the ideological struggle for fostering the proletarian ideology and liquidating the bourgeois ideology is the fundamental task in the ideological sphere. This contradiction takes several decades or a longer period to solve. To assume their own ideological task, socialist literature and art must have an army of men who steadfastly take the proletarian stand and are capable of observing life with Mao Tsetung thought, of reflecting the thoughts and feelings of the broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers and of weathering the storm. The key question remains to be one of world outlook.

Therefore, I feel that the more prominent question to day lies at the ideological level. This is so regardless of whether the social standing of writers or the problem reflected in their creation is concerned. The way to solve contradictions is to exert ourselves in the study of Marxism-Leninism, in transforming thoughts and feelings and in doing deep into life. The study of Marxism-Leninism calls not for the use of philosophic concepts to take the place of thinking in terms of images and the molding of models, but for learning the ability to analyze life and the spiritual world of personalities with the Marxist stand and viewpoint. The great writers of every era in the past had made such an analysis of life with their own philosophy.

According to Liu Shao-t'ang's guideline, the most important question today is how to give pursuit to the affecting power and appeal of art, and all other questions are of secondary importance. Under the circumstance that the class struggle will exist for a long time in the ideological sphere, apart

from leading the literature and art of China toward the road of art for art's sake and of serving bourgeois politics, what other result can this "guideline" lead to?

Two Basic Questions

Liu Shao-t'ang's revisionist theory has its origin. His teacher is Ho Chih (何直). Ho Chih's legnthy article against socialist literature and art is one of the sources of the revisionist trend of thought that has been going on for more than half a year. We'll criticize and repudiate Ho Chih's theory in the next article. But I feel that two more basic questions must be discussed here.

One question deals with dialectics. In his article, Liu Shao-t'ang employs an abundance of dialectical terms to oppose "dogmatism." What is his dialectics after all? Take the following passage for example:

> But the method of going deep into life varies with people, and as far as a writer is concerned, whether or not he has gone deep into life must be examined on the basis of his works. The plunging of a writer into life is like the plunging of a fish into water, and so long as it is in the water, there is no need to formulate a unified breeding method in regard to how it should swim and live. The adaption of a creature to its environment and its transformation of the environment are determined by objective circumstances and subjective conditions, and this also applies to a writer's going deep into life.

Probably this is the "flexible application" (this term is borrowed from a gentleman) of Marxism! There are people who appreciate this kind of "genuine Marxism" at the moment. However, I would like to ask:

First, since the object of a writer going deep into the life of the laboring people is to learn from the laboring people and to transform his own ideas and sentiments, how comes it that the writer's going deep into life is put on par with "the adaption of a creature to its environment and its transformation of the environment"? Can it be said that in going deep into life, the principal object of the writer is not to learn and to remold himself but to "remold" the workers and peasants?

Second, what are called "objective circumstances" and "subjective conditions"? Since they are linked together with "there is no need to formulate a unified breeding method," we know that this means there is no need to require arbitrarily every writer to go amidst the laboring people! He is free to go into whatever kind of life he likes, and "unification" is not called for. "Unification" is also not called for as to how deep he should go and whether he must exert himself in learning from the laboring people. He can "go deep" in whatever way he likes, and this is none of the business of other people.

It is true that the conditions of writers are at variance. This characteristic should not be obliterated but should receive every attention. But there is one basic point in common. This is, regardless of whether he goes deep amidst the workers or the peasants and regardless of to what work post he is attached, he must, as Chairman Mao has taught, go deep into life unconditionally and wholeheartedly for a long time. He should not go into life superficially "to learn from experience" but should strike root in life, take part in struggle and turn himself into a member of the laboring people. He must adopt the attitude of sharing weal and woe with and of learning from the laboring people, must remold his way of thinking and must strive to be an advanced fighter in life. Otherwise, even though he is talented, he also would go astray.

Liu Shao-t'ang has cut away this common quality at the time of clamoring for particularity.

Dogmatism tends to emphasize the general but neglect the particular, emphasize the common character of things but neglect the individual character. However, revisionism tends to emphasize the particular but neglect the general, emphasize the individual character of things but negate the common laws. The method used by Liu Shao-t'ang has negated the common characteristic of going deep into life under the pretext of emphasizing the particularity of each writer.

Another basic question is the question of Party leadership. Can the leadership of the Party over the literary and art undertaking be negated? Definitely not! Without the leadership of the Party, literature and art would fall into bourgeois hands. But at present, certain people describe the leadership of the Party as dogmatism, sectarianism, bureaucratism, and they think that the literary and art undertaking has done nothing positive after liberation. Liu Shao-t'ang has effused this kind of sentiment in his article. Besides, this kind of sentiment is also found in a good number of articles in the Wen-i Pao. Can we agree with this viewpoint? Definitely not!

The history of the revolutionary literature movement shows that only under the leadership of the Party can proletarian literature and art move forward, ceaselessly adapt themselves to the political tasks of various historical periods, and overcome the attack of all kinds of bourgeois trends of thought. It is also under the leadership of the Party only that the thinking of writers can make ceaseless progress with times. Abolishing the leadership of the Party means abolishing the soul of proletarian literature and art and reducing it into an empty shell.

Dogmatism and sectarianism must be criticized and repudiated, but the leadership of the Party is opposed to dogmatism and sectarianism. Haven't we seen this clearly from the events of the past few months, from the policies of the Party and from Chairman Mao's report? The desire to utilize opposition to dogmatism to negate the leadership of the Party is of no avail. The broad masses of the writers also will never agree to this.

I feel that we should not slacken our vigilance against the bourgeois ideology in the literary and art sphere today because of opposition to dogmatism. Those crude mistakes of trying to kill at one blow should not be committed again, but the banner of ideological struggle should never be lowered. Revolutionary literature and art must forever advance in the ideological struggle--this is an objective law. We must consciously understand and grasp this law so as to give impetus to the incessant forward development of socialist literature.

June, 1957

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